



*“Attack Helicopters ‘Cobras ’ were inducted in Pakistan Army in March 1985 with a role to destroy enemy armoured formations. This is a history of their operations and an account of their culture, institutions, training and dedication”.*

*Pakistan Army Institute of Military History*



An Illustrated History. 1985-2019

# COBRAS

Pakistan Army Aviation



An Illustrated History of AH-1F ‘Cobra’ 1985-2019



Major (Retired) Aamir Cheema



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# Message

***Major General Nasir Dilawar Shah, Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Military)***

***General Officer Commanding, Pakistan Army Aviation***

The long war against militancy is now coming to an end with miscreants finding it hard to escape the wrath of state. Pakistan Army has endured this one of the longest campaigns in military history with patience, dedication, hard work, and above all, with unparalleled sacrifices. I am proud to say that Army Aviation has always been in the forefront in this war on terror since its inception. The terrain and nature of this campaign is such that only Army Aviation could react in time and with venom, and this is where the role of Cobras becomes important and vital.

This war against militancy has transformed the role of Army Aviation, i.e. from supporting arm, it has truly emerged as a fighting arm. Within the Army Aviation, the concept of team work between the liaison, cargo and combat helicopters has not only nurtured but now it has fully matured. We have inducted new helicopters and aircrafts in the last decade and a half, and are still in the process of acquiring more. The number of pilots inducted in Army Aviation are on the rise to keep pace with the requirement while training standards have become higher and more scientific in nature. New bases have been established to accommodate our assets and to cut short the time response. We have learned from this war on terror that an act of terror can take place at a most unexpected place, thus a continuous surveillance, search and cordon, casualty evacuation, insertion and extrication of force will be the order of the day. Thus, Army Aviation is the first responder in any situation and Combat helicopters are the only means to give a first blow to any miscreant, whether an individual, a group or a state.

The present book is a good addition to our military and aviation heritage. It preserves history of our Combat Squadrons and Group. This preservation of history has a direct impact on the morale and outlook of the pilots and ground crew as it highlights the means and ways to overcome shortfalls of material and time.

Combat Group has done a commendable work. My appreciation to the author as well.





# Foreword

*By Commander Combat Group*

The new millennium brought crisis the world over in the form of terror, with Pakistan being the frontline state. There were threats on our Western Frontier and Eastern border simultaneously. Combat Group was initially deployed in Balochistan and Kohat. This was the first time since their raising and induction that Cobras were deployed west of River Indus. The crisis on eastern border was real and much more menacing. The Combat Group thwarted the Indian threat by displaying first ever night firing capability. This ushered Combat Group into a new era of Night Vision Google (NVG) operations, i.e. ability to operate and strike at night. The capability to strike at night was the turning point in the Combat Group. It must be noted that such ability does not rely solely upon the equipment; it depends upon the pilots' training as well. For next three years, an extensive training was carried out to master the NVGs and, by 2005, its end results started emerging. From 2003 onwards, the long-awaited co-operation with Special Services Group (SSG) took an operational form in the shape of Special Operations Task Force (SOTF). Aviation had operated with SSG in the past but it was always limited and only in the form of heli-drops and pick-up. With Cobras, now it has become one force. SOTF conducted quite a number of operations in 2004-2006, including Angoor Adda, Kalosha and Lawara Mandi. These were the biggest heli-borne operations till that time. Cobras' role was to secure the landing zone and to eliminate any miscreants who broke free from the cordon. Administratively and operationally, these operations were not planned and conducted by the Combat Group. A technical fault in one of the Jet Rangers at Mianwali in August 2005, changed the scenario when Brigadier Muhammad Tahir (retired as major general), the commander of the Combat Group, thus flew in a Cobra with Lieutenant Colonel Abid Saeed (later brigadier and Commander Combat Group) to Wana. Subsequently, a flight of Cobras was deployed at Wana, standing operating procedures were drafted and Combat Group got involved in true sense with the operations being carried out in the tribal areas; this was not the only deployment. Since December 2005 Combat Group was fully engrossed in the forthcoming operations in Balochistan. The Operations in Balochistan were different in nature from the other operations; the magnitude of firepower was less but the duration of flying and the administrative aspects were far graver than the tribal areas operations. Cobras were deployed at Jacobabad and Quetta for the operations. The fine dust took its toll on the sensitive parts of Cobra, for which there was no remedy other than to repeatedly carry out compressor wash. By 2007, the Cobras were deployed from Turbat in the South to Bajaur in the North. The induction of another dozen Cobras from America partially offset this operational dichotomy, even the simulator training was resumed only in 2007 after a lapse of seventeen years. In such circumstances, the credit goes to the maintenance battalion for keeping the fleet air worthy. The dedication of our flying instructors and the enthusiasm of newly inducted pilots cannot be encompassed in mere words. The handling of emergencies at Multan by Major Kashif Bhatti and at Kohat by Major Khalid Maoz is worth noting. As the centre of gravity of operations was in the tribal areas, thus a forward operating base was established at Peshawar. It proved its worth in subsequent years, especially during operations in Swat, Dir, Bajaur, Mohmand and Khyber. Operation at Peochar was definitely a turning point in the war on militancy being the largest operation to date of the SSG. In this, the role of Cobras was vital as they had to ensure the securing of landing zones.

From 2010 onwards, the commanders of Combat Group and the commanding officers in Combat Squadrons were all veterans of the operations. Brigadier Abid Saeed, T.Bt, was succeeded by Brigadier Ejaz Ahmed, followed by Brigadier Wajahat Ghumman, T.Bt Bar. A change has been brought into the already combative culture of Combat Group. A new squadron Air Mustang was raised in 2007. A Combat Conversion Wing has also been established to impart the drills and techniques of combat in the Home of Cobras. During this period of intense internal security operations, the primary task of destroying enemy armoured formations was never put into back seat. The regular training exercises with field formations, study periods, in house discussions and formulation of new doctrine were and are in progress. In 2008, a situation almost similar to the 2001 again took place on our eastern borders. Combat Group





remains under command to the Headquarters Army Aviation Command and, as such, progress is directly and indirectly due to the keen interest of the General Officers Commanding. Chiefs of Army Staff have also shown greater interest in the development and maintenance of this fighting arm. Former COAS General Raheel Shareef flew in a Cobra during a field exercise in February 2016. Same holds true for the present Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa. War on Terror has finally brought a peace in the country. The Combat Base has undergone a drastic and positive transition. The high alert and security is now around the clock; there is no laxity in it. A state of modern technology security apparatus has been installed along with dedicated security companies and battalion. The troops' welfare in such circumstances takes an unprecedented priority and that has resulted in an improved living environment for them and their families. Sports competitions are being held with same spirit and zeal as in the past. The present chronicle has been compiled with an aim to preserve our history, to educate the new generations of Cobra pilots regarding their culture and heritage, to acknowledge the dedication of pilots and ground crew, and to motivate the young officers to join Army Aviation and subsequently Combat Group. I, personally and also on behalf of the Combat Group, am grateful to Major Aamir Cheema (retired) for fulfilling this task. I am also grateful to all the commanding officers and the staff officers in extending full support. In the end, Combat Group is indebted to Major General Nasir Dilawar Shah, General Officer Commanding Army Aviation, for his patronage and support in making this project a reality.

Brigadier Rizwan Mahmud  
Multan, 24 September 2018







## Preface

On 9th September 1985 I, Colonel (Retired) Muhammad Riffat Beg Humayun, T.Bt, was the Group because this was the day that I was appointed Commander Army Aviation Combat Group; on that particular day, I was the first and the only member of this group. I realized early on that, this being the first combat element in the true sense in Army Aviation, we would have to work exceptionally hard to formulate procedures that we would be required to follow for safe and successful operations. Although, soon after, the Americans provided us with a TFAT team (Technical Field Assistance Team) to assist us in setting up our formation, we relied heavily on our own local systems that already existed in Army Aviation; all we needed to do was to modify and adapt these to our own environment.

The procedure I followed was simple: involve everyone from the junior most to the senior most including officers of the Maintenance Group. We used to meet as a group and discuss various aspects threadbare, formulate a process / procedure and apply it practically, making the required changes as we went along. One such procedure that we adopted was not to allow single aircraft operations except for air tests and pilot checkouts; the aircraft operated only in teams. The result was that during my command of a shade over three years, the group flew over 3000 hours without even an incident.

Having proved itself in operations in the recent past, the Group is now a great asset for the Pakistan Army. May it never allow the flag to be lowered.

May Allah be with you always!





## Cobra; 1985-2002

### **‘Ammunition Bay door Closed, Canopy down and locked, Crew Chief unhook’**

Afghan war of 1978 brought a paradigm shift in international politics and Pakistan became a frontline country. American offers of aid were initially rejected by the Pakistan terming it as peanuts, later when Americans agreed to our terms then the military and economic aid started flowing. The two important military items in the Pakistan wish list were F-16 for PAF and Cobra helicopters for the army. In 1981, a team including technical and ordnance officers apart from army flyers arrived in America. It was on the last day of 1981 when Major General Aslam Beg signed the contract on behalf of Pakistan Army. The deal was worth \$300 million for twenty odd Cobras, including technical facilities apart from training of crew in United States.

In the Year 1983, after the deal was finalized, paper work on organizing the Cobra Combat Group started. In later part of the year, pilots and maintenance crew started departing for USA for training. Training was to be conducted at US Army Aviation School at Fort Rucker, Alabama in three phases. The first phase was of Rotary Wing Instrument Course of six weeks, consisting of 40-50 hours on simulators and 10 hours of actual flying on UH-1H. After the first phase, there was a break of one week and then six weeks Cobra conversion in second phase. In the last phase “On Job Training” was carried out with an American Squadron for six weeks.



*Pakistani Officers undergoing Cobra Training in USA - Eid Day 1985*

### **Cobras Induction in Pakistan**

On 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1984 the first set of two Pakistani officers trained on Cobra helicopters at Fort Rucker Alabama, reported back on duty at Multan Base, they were Lieutenant Colonel Riffat Beg Humayun and Major Saleem Akhund SJ. By the end of 1984, trained pilots in the absence of machine were posted for interim period with the cargo squadrons. Major Ashraf Chaudhry and Major Issar Hussain Jafery were the first pair who besides doing Cobra conversion, also did instructor rating and instrument rating examiner (IRE). They were followed by Colonel Riffat Baig Humayun, Major Salim Akhund SJ, Major Hashim Khan, Major Asad Kamal, Major Wahid Khan and Major Shahid Qureshi. Major Shahid Jameel and Major Shoukat Ibrahim were the first two test pilots. Along with the pilots, the maintenance personnel comprising of officers, Junior Commissioned officers and Non-Commissioned officers





were also trained in USA. From this group, Lieutenant Colonel Nafees Ul Haq and Major Asif Javed Ghorri led the way in the maintenance field of the armed helicopters.

On 9<sup>th</sup> January 1985, the first batch of AH-1F Cobra helicopters arrived at Karachi by a special chartered flight in a semi-knocked down (SKD) state. A team of four officers, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Nafees Ul Haq, four junior commissioned officers (JCO) and twenty non-commissioned officers with assistance of a group of US experts, carried out the re-assembly. The first helicopter to be flight tested was No 786-

007, on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1985. On 15<sup>th</sup> February helicopters were shifted to the Faisal Base from where on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1985 all the choppers in two batches of five each were airborne at 0705 hours, proudly led by Colonel Riffat Beg Humayun, after refueling at Sukkur, Cobras landed at Multan at 1300 hours. A warm welcome headed by the Chief of General Staff Major General Aslam Beg, awaited them. The second batch of ten Cobra helicopters arrived at Karachi also in semi knocked down (SKD) condition in October 1986. Assembly team was headed by Lieutenant Colonel Asif Javed Ghorri, helicopters were ferried to Multan in two batches on 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> October 1986, respectively.<sup>1</sup>

On 17 March 1985, a formal induction ceremony for the Cobra helicopters was arranged at Qasim Base where the Vice Chief of Army Staff General Khalid Mahmood Arif was the chief guest. During the same month the Cobra helicopters participated in the fly past of the Joint Services Pakistan Day's Parade for the first time and the Nation saw them on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1985 with pride and well placed confidence. Since then the Cobra helicopters have become an integral part of this annual grand ceremony.

*The paper work on organizing Cobra Squadron started in early 1983. After the deal was finalized in later part of the year, pilots and maintenance crew started departing to USA for training. Headquarters Army Aviation Combat Group was raised on adhoc basis under Headquarters Multan Army Aviation Base in the last quarter of 1984. The 10 x unassembled helicopters arrived in Karachi in Jan 1985. On 16 Feb 1985 the helicopters were flown from Karachi to Multan and Chief of General Staff received these helicopters at the base. On 17 Mar 1985, AH-1F helicopter was formally inducted into Pakistan Army. An impressive ceremony was held at Qasim Army Aviation Base which was attended by Vice Chief Of Army Staff, Chief of Naval Staff and Chief of Air Staff. The 23 mar 1985 was first Joint Services Pakistan Day parade in which the Cobras also took part. On 26 mar 1985, formal Letter of GHQ was received intimating the raising of 33 Army Aviation combat Squadron signed on 12 Mar 1985 ( the raising day of the sqn)*

<sup>1</sup> Combat Group Digest of Service





## Panzer and Air Wolves

31 and 33 Squadrons were raised on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1985. Both Squadrons remained under officiating command, 31 under Major Saleem Akhund and 33 under Major Asad Kamal. Both squadrons were allotted call signs by PAF, which are changed frequently, however the very first call signs were adopted by the squadrons as their nomenclature. 33 Squadron Digest of Service records that 'On 25<sup>th</sup> April 1985 Sepoy Mohammad Shafiq and Clerk Mohabat Khan were the first soldiers to report to this new outfit'. On 18<sup>th</sup> May 1985, the very first junior commissioned officers reported in 31 Panzer Squadron, Naib Subedar Muhammad Ahmed, followed by Subedar Muhammad Bashir, Mansoor Ahmed was the very first Subedar Major of Panzer, squadron had its religious teacher Naib Khateeb Muhammad Afzal posted in February 1986. By first week of May 1985, Air Wolves had thirty other ranks on its strength. Niamat Gul was appointed as head clerk and Naib Subedar Muhammad Ashraf as the very first senior junior commissioned officer, Havildar Mubraz Khan as the regimental Havildar major and Havildar Muhammad Bashir as the regimental quarter master Havildar (RQMH). It was on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1985 that Squadrons moved to their present office accommodation next to the hangar which was previously with the ordnance branch. 31 Squadron by virtue of its numerical seniority got the ground floor and in Multan ground floor occupation is something worth cherishing. Soldiers living accommodation was in the shape of SM barrack next to the road. The pattern thus evolved was that 33 had its manpower living intact with a big ground in front, as a compensation for upper floor office area.

| <u>THE RAISING TEAM</u>                                  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>Major Asad Kamal Khan</i><br>( Officiating Comd Offr) | <i>Major Abdul Wahid Khan</i><br>( zic and Ops Offr) |
| <i>Major Hashim Khan</i>                                 | <i>Major M.A Asif Sarhandi</i>                       |
| <i>Maj Taqi Naseer Rizwi</i><br>( Quarter Master)        | <i>Maj Reginald George Foulds</i>                    |
| <i>Capt Pervez Sultan Khan</i><br>( Adjutant)            | <i>Capt Zafar Ahmed Saleem</i>                       |

33 Squadron

A Headquarters Army Aviation Combat Group was raised for the command and control of the Cobra Squadrons, alongwith the headquarters and squadrons, raising orders for Army Aviation Engineering Group IV, 1,2, and 3 Forward Area Arming and refueling Companies were also issued. Colonel Riffat Beg Humayun was the first commander with Lieutenant Colonel Bashir Baz as GSO-1, Major Israr Hussain Jaffery as GSO-II operations, Major Arif Rasul Qureshi as GSO-II training , Major Hadeed Anver Malik

| <u>THE PIONEERS</u>                |                            |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>COL RIFFAT BEG HUMAYUN</b>      | <b>COMD</b>                |
| <b>LT COL BASHIR BAZ</b>           | <b>GSO-I (OPS&amp;TRG)</b> |
| <b>MAJ ISAR HUSSAIN JAFERY</b>     | <b>GSO-II (OPS)</b>        |
| <b>MAJ ARIF RASUL QURESHI</b>      | <b>GSO-II (TRG)</b>        |
| <b>MAJ HADEED ANVER MALIK</b>      | <b>GSO-II (FS)</b>         |
| <b>MAJ M. ABDUL BAQUI SIDDIQUI</b> | <b>DAAGQMG</b>             |
| <b>CAPT SONAIB ATHAR DURRANI</b>   | <b>SC</b>                  |

Combat Group

| <u>THE RAISING TEAM</u>           |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>MAJ SALEEM AKHUND,SJ</b>       |  |
| <b>MAJ SHAHID AHMED QURESHI</b>   |  |
| <b>MAJ SHAUKAT IBRAHIM TI(M)</b>  |  |
| <b>MAJ SHAFIQUE UR REHMAN</b>     |  |
| <b>MAJ AZKAR AHMED KHAN LODHI</b> |  |
| <b>MAJ SHAHID AZHAR ANSARI</b>    |  |
| <b>MAJ TUGHRAL BASHIR</b>         |  |
| <b>SM MANSOOR AHMED</b>           |  |
| <b>SUB MUHAMMAD BASHIR</b>        |  |
| <b>SUB ABDUL RAZZAQ</b>           |  |
| <b>SUB MUHAMMAD RIAZ</b>          |  |
| <b>SUB ALLAH DITTA</b>            |  |
| <b>N/SUB MUHAMMAD AHMED</b>       |  |
| <b>N/KTB MUHAMMAD AFZAL</b>       |  |

31 Squadron



## *17th March 1985 induction ceremony of Cobra at Qasim Base*



*Standing from left: Kureshi, Wahid Khan, Hashim, Asad Kamal, Nafees-ul-Haq, Riffat Baig, Maj Gen Aslam Baig, Gen K.M. Arif, Brig Mokeet, - , - Hadeed, Zulfiqar, Shoaib, Sitting from Left: NCO, NCO, Saleem Akhund, Isar Jaffery, Sirhindi, Shafeeq-ur-Rehman, Shaukat Ibrahim, Reginald George, Taqi Rizvi, Azkar Lodhi, Tughrul, Iqbal, NCO*





*Arrival of Cobras at Multan, 16th February 1985*









*Flight of Cobras AH-1F*







*Majors: Suhail (Colonel), Ahsan (Lt Col), Kureishy (Colonel), Zulfiqar (Brig), Kingravi (Maj Gen), Roghani (Lt Col): in the field*





as GSO II Flight Safety; all these staff officers later on rose to the rank of brigadiers, with Brigadier Bashir Baz commanding the Multan Base and Arif rasul commanded the Army Aviation School, Israr Hussain Jaffery later commanded Panzer Squadron and Qasim Base. Brigadier Hadeed Anver Malik also had a unique distinction in years to come his son Uqba was commissioned from Sandhurst and later had the distinction to be the very first platoon commander from Pakistan at Sandhurst. Two other staff officers in the newly raised headquarters were Major Muhammad Abdul Baqi as DAA & QMG and Captain Sohaib Ather Durrani as staff captain. Overall the newly raised Combat Headquarters was undercommand Multan Army Aviation Base which at that time was being commanded by Brigadier Sajjad Nazim.



*Cobra flying near Multan*

Early days of Cobras were a mixture of professionalism and fun; these pioneer pilots set new traditions and pattern not only for army aviation but for the army itself. Utter dedication to the machine which was new and as such each pilot tried his best to master it in entirety. The training and subsequent yearly simulator training in Germany broaden their horizon, no doubt they were the envy of all. They devised battle drill procedures which remained in vogue till the new generation modified them in light of the war on terror experience. Every day from the first light to the dark hours the air of Multan was thrilled with the unique sound of Cobra rotor stop. Colonel Riffat Beg Humayun set the doctrine of Cobras, initially he started training in four distinct phases that includes handling proficiency, individual training, combat drills and finally gunnery which culminated in aerial firing. The first aerial firing was conducted on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1985 and it culminated in a demonstration for the general staff officers that includes Chief of General Staff, commander corps, General Officer Armoured Division and few other officers. Group in its infancy was visited by a large number of senior officers and dignitaries. Among them was the then Chief of General Staff (CGS) Pakistan Army, Lieutenant General Muhammad Safdar, who was briefed about the helicopter after which the group commander, Colonel Riffat Beg Humayun took him up and demonstrated the capabilities of the machine, CGS had the honour of being the very first non-Cobra pilot to fly in a Cobra.





The pattern of training for the Combat Group was devised by Colonel Riffat Beg, he prepared the very first model exercise for the group name Flying Arrow which was held in December 1985, aim was to carryout planning and conduct of Combat Group in support of field formation in the framework of corps defensive operations. In April 1986, Flying Arrow II was conducted in which the entire Combat Group moved to Mailsi, primary aim was to practice the move to concentrated area, carry out operational reconnaissance, plan and conduct operations within defensive battle framework. 1987 started on a bad omen when entire Cobra fleet was grounded for well over two months due to excessive magnesium contents in hydraulic fluid and cracks in the root end fittings of the main rotor blades; fleet was put back on flying status in March 1987 just before the Joint Services Parade.

The range for aerial firing of Cobras was selected not far from the base, main consideration was the administrative factor as unlike other arms (artillery and armour) the Cobras had to be back to Multan for the night. The present-day range was selected keeping these factors in view, it was mainly a desert at that time spread over a thousand acres. The initial targets were empty fuel barrels which were erected and painted white, for the crew and ground crew there was no shelter thus an adhoc camp had to be established which comprised of tent fly. Before the second aerial field firing, all pilots of Combat Group were given practice on artillery firing procedures on miniature firing range, later ground and aerial shoots were conducted at Khairpur Tamewali Range. In the second aerial firing (15-25 September 1986) apart from cannon and rockets, TOWs were also fired, a total of 38 TOWs were fired out of which 32 hit the target. The ideal composition is that pilot is practiced in all three firing skills namely cannon, rockets and TOWs, however in case of latter there have been certain restrictions imposed from time to time thus in 1987 only cannons and rockets were fired.

Aviation and specially Cobras require a highly skilled and intelligent ground crew which includes training of soldiers who were all from artillery. Cadres were conducted to orientate them with the aviation way of working, these includes firefighting, first aid to name few. In 1987 the first concentrated and joint training of Forward Area Arming Refuelling (FAAR) Companies was carried out under supervision of 31 Squadron. FAAR is an integral concept and

# THE SAGA

- **12 MARCH 1985** - **ARMY AVIATION COMBAT GROUP WAS RAISED**
- **9 JANUARY 1985** - **FIRST BATCH OF "COBRA" HELICOPTERS ARRIVED IN PAKISTAN**
- **16 FEBRUARY 1985** - **FLEET OF TEN HELICOPTERS LANDED AT MULTAN**
- **17 MARCH 1985** - **INDUCTION CEREMONY HELD AT QASIM ARMY AVN BASE VICE CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF GENERAL K M ARIF GRACED THE OCCASION ON CHIEF GUEST**
- **OCTOBER 1986** - **SECOND BATCH OF TEN HELICOPTERS ARRIVED IN PAKISTAN**
- **MARCH 1987** - **JORDANIAN AIR FORCE DELEGATION VISITED COMBAT GROUP TO ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN ARMY AVIATION COMBAT SQUADRON**
- 1989** - **AMERICAN MOBILE TRAINING TEAM (MTT) TRAINED TWO BATCHES OF AERO SCOUT PILOTS**
- 1989** - **COMBAT GROUP PARTICIPATED IN ARMY LEVEL EXERCISE "ZARB-E MOMIN"**
- **FEBRUARY 1994** - **PAKISTAN COMBAT AVIATION GROUP PROCEEDED TO SOMALIA FOR UNITED NATION PEACE KEEPING MISSION**
- **19 APRIL 1994** - **PAKISTAN COBRA PILOTS SUPPORTED INDIAN CONTINGENT DURING RESCUE OPERATION IN SOMALIA**
- **JUNE 1994** - **COMMANDING OF ICER 31 ARMY AVIATION COMBAT SQUADRON PRESENTED REG MENTAL COLOUR TO 10 ROYAL JORDANIAN AIR FORCE SQUADRON (RAJF) AT JORDAN**
- **24 FEBRUARY 1997** - **ROYAL JORDANIAN AIR FORCE SQUADRON PRESENTED REGIMENTAL COLOUR IN AFFILIATION CEREMONY TO 31 ARMY AVIATION COMBAT SQUADRON AT MULTAN**



*Colonel Riffat Baig Humayun, Lt Col Asad Kamal*





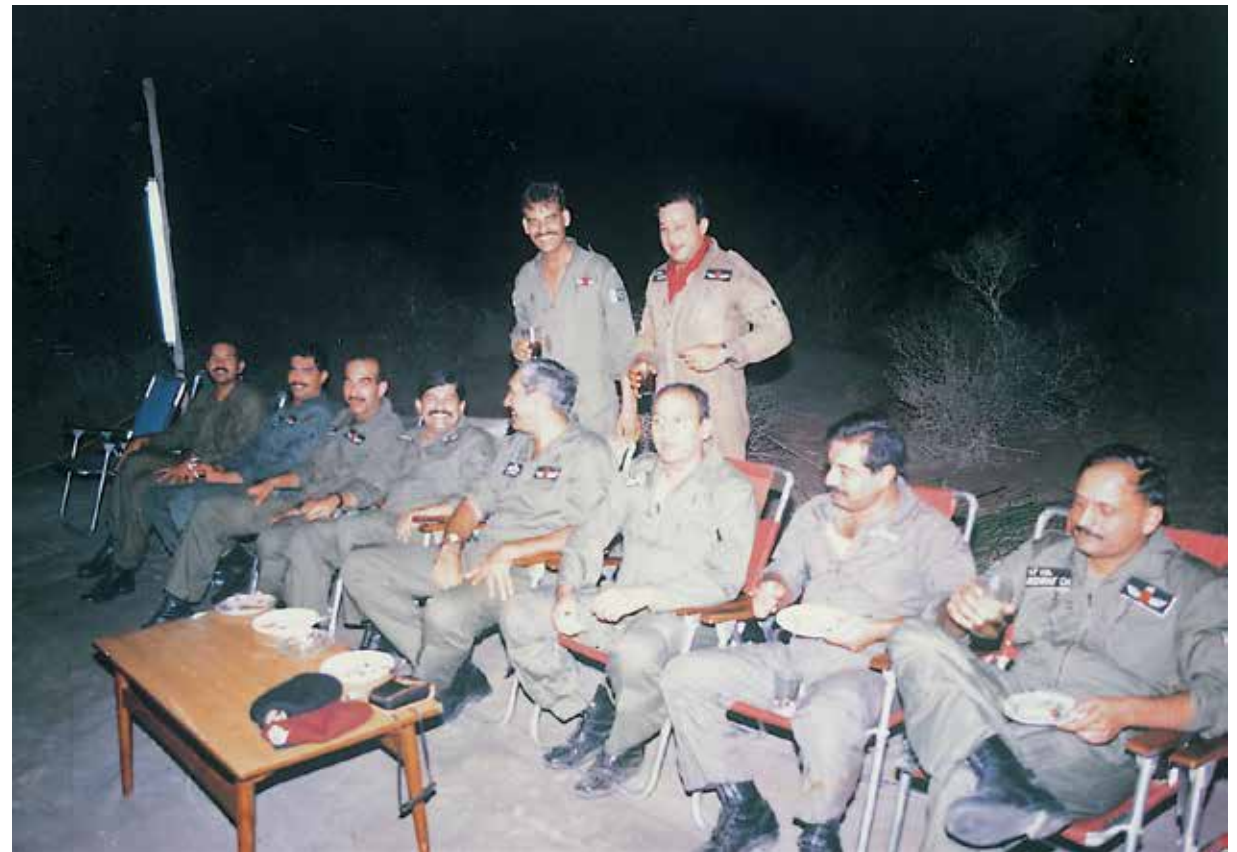


part of Cobra and Combat Group concept of operations. Cobras are bound to operate in the field against the enemy armoured thus they require a forward area arming and refuelling point and this is the responsibility of these FAAR companies. For a decade and half these FAAR companies remained deployed at Multan, Karachi, and Mangla; it was during the war on terror that these FAAR proved their worth and mettle by ensuring operations of Cobras in the most hostile territory. These companies were commanded by aviators. It was during exercise Knight Rider in 1987 that these companies were put to test. Again in 1988 these companies were put under integrated training conducted by 33 Squadron at Multan.

The pattern of life at the base was quite interesting, two combat squadrons were housed in a single barrack and were under command the combat group but overall, they were under the command of the Multan Aviation Base. There were two Puma Squadrons also in the base, the working and flying pattern of these two flying machines are entirely different and as such from the onset Cobras became rather reclusive in nature. It was in 1986 (December) that for the first time three Cobras pilots were posted out, to the Puma Squadrons within the base.

In the very first year of Cobra no less than four officers were selected for the command and staff college, they were Majors Ashraf Choudhry, Ashraf Warraich, Shahid Jamil and Waqar Ahmed Kingravi, among these Ashraf and Kingravi later rose to the rank of major generals and commanded Army Aviation corps. In 1986, Majors Hashim Khan, Mussadiq Abbasi, Arshad Iqbal and Arif Nazir were selected for C&SC, later Arif Nazir rose to the rank of major general. Cobra pilots were selected after competing on open seats for the coveted Command and Staff College Quetta.

In October 1987, the first transition took place when Lieutenant Colonel Javed Jahan commanding officer of 31 Squadron was posted as general staff officer grade 1 (GSO 1) to the Combat Group; he was succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel Ashraf Choudhry. Major General Ashraf Choudhry later not only commanded the Combat Group but he also commanded Army Aviation Corps and after retirement served as secretary defence. In December 1988, the commanding officer of 33 Squadron was also posted out and command was taken over by Lieutenant Colonel Saleem Akhund SJ. Saleem Akhund later rose to the rank of brigadier and commanded Army Aviation School, and was a strict disciplinarian; unfortunately, he left for final abode sooner than others.

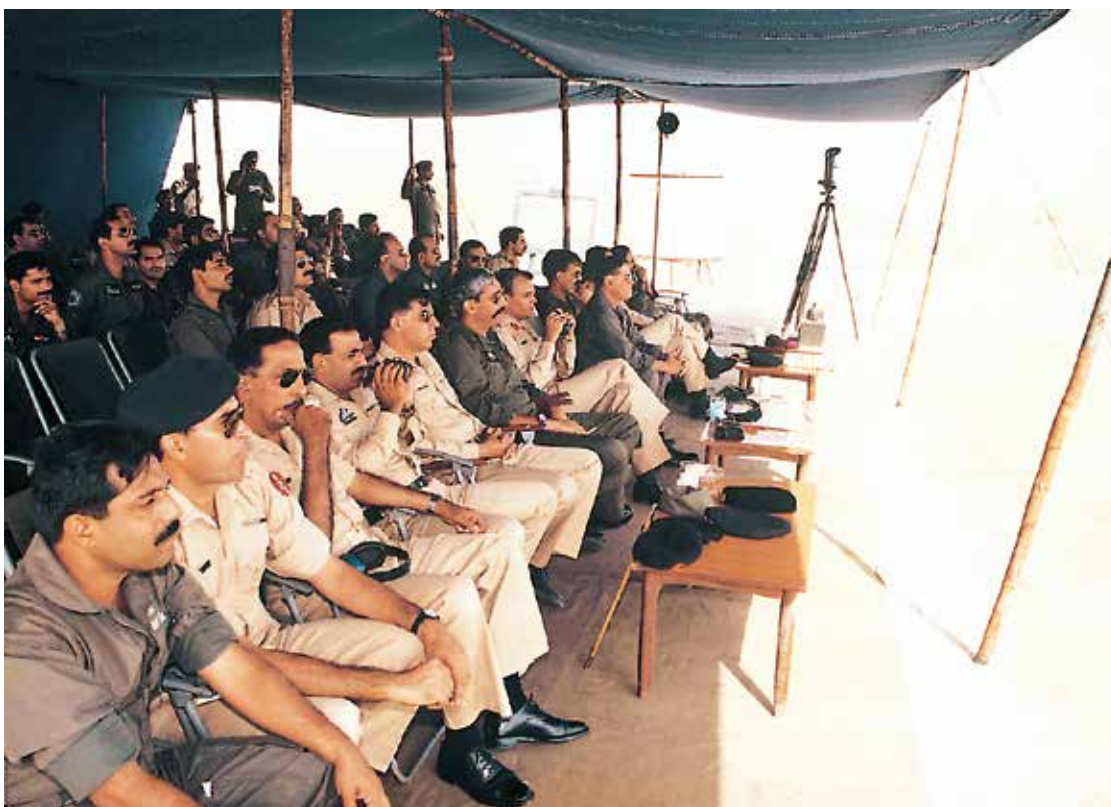


*From Right: Lt Col Ashraf, Lt Col Ghauri, Lt Col Nafees, Col Riffat, Maj Akhund SJ,  
Maj Arshad, Maj Liaqat Raja  
Standing: Maj Tipu Sultan and Lt Col Asad Kamal*



*Jet Ranger*





*First Aerial Firing, Ground Observation Post*

In January 1989, the last transition within the Combat Group took place when Colonel Riffat Beg Humayun was posted out. Colonel Riffat has same stature, aura and legacy which Major General Mittha has in Special Service Group, Colonel Riffat nurtured the Cobras, he was popularly referred as King Cobra, being from an armoured regiment he introduced certain good traditions in the combat group which are practiced even today, loyalty to the Cobras is the first among them. He had a patience and well understood the psyche of his pilots, at that time Cobra pilots were a celebrity in themselves They had a huge fan following in Multan which includes fair sex as well. Colonel Riffat accepted and propagated the fact that Cobra pilots are a different breed not only in army but even within army aviation. The fact that Cobra is an attack helicopter and the feelings which the pilots now carries is entirely different from the other machines. It is not a question of technique but rather that of attitude and as such he wanted his pilots to have this aggressive posture. Colonel Riffat stressed that a hallmark of a Cobra pilot is in adhering to the rules and regulations, he would not tolerate any casualness on any body's part, for him any indication on ground of a pilot being careless in any segment was an indicator of a bigger hazard in air. To him, it was a blessing that we all have been selected to fly this coveted machine and as such our turnout and living pattern must reflect this, 'do not bother about petty financial issues' was his favourite sentence, followed by 'think about the enemy and how you will

destroy him'. Colonel Riffat was a tall man and as such it was always a problem to get the camp cot for him because he would always sleep on it in the field 'We are thankful to the group commander for staying with us in the field, although the whole squadron kept wondering how he fixed himself on a tubular at night'.<sup>2</sup> He was followed by Colonel Sajid Ali, he was not a Cobra pilot and as such he first converted onto the Cobra but it took him some time to understand the dynamics of this new outfit.

Battle inoculation, aerial field firing, artillery shoots, joint services parade, fire power demonstrations were the order of the day. Both squadrons were affiliated with field formations and took active part in the training exercises of these formations. A fire power demonstration was given by the 33 Squadron at Tilla Ranges in October 1988 which was witnessed by visiting USA military delegation as well. General Carl E. Vuono Chief of Staff of US later visited the Multan Base. A year later squadron again carried out same inoculation which was witnessed by first female Prime Minister of Islamic country, our very own Benazir Bhutto.

Exercise Sky Guard held in September 1989 was the first exercise conducted by Army Aviation Command in which the Combat Group took part. It was carried out in Mangla



## *Cobras in Field*







– Gujranwala area. Apart from the two combat squadrons, 351 Field Supply Platoon and 2 FAAR Company also took part in it. Pilots of 31 Squadron acted as umpires, main aim of this exercise was to develop and test the air space management, Major Tahir Ali and Major Anjum Rafi burnt midnight oil as DQs for the exercise.

### **Hanau and Illeshiam - Second Home of Cobra**

In July 1985, simulator training started for the Cobra pilots at Hanau Germany. For next five years, this small place became second home for aviators, till it was closed due to American embargo. Hanau is a small town about 30 minutes drive from Frankfurt. Illeshiam was another small town where own Cobra pilots underwent simulator training in developing combat drills and procedures apart from tactical flying techniques. Officers went there in batches, this simulator training was an annual affair. Cobra pilots were the only officers in entire army which were having so frequent foreign trips. Major Tipu Sultan (later brigadier retired, commanded Combat Group) and Major Liaqat Raja, travelled all across Europe on rail after their simulator training. Ten-fifteen days leave after simulator training was a standard affair. In another memorable trip, Major Liaqat Raja, Captain Suleman Bashir ‘Chiefy’ and Major Ahsan Janjua, bought cars from Germany/ England and drove back to Pakistan in a convoy. In many instances, Cobra pilots went for simulator training from the field and joined the squadron in the field. Another simulator training was started in 1990 in the Karachi PIA simulator training school, but it was exclusively for instrument flying whereas in Germany it was focussed on simulating emergencies.



*From Left: Maj Asif Sirhindi, Maj Zafar Saleem, Lt Col Asad Kamal, Maj Pervez Sultan, Maj George, Maj Ansari*





## Aero Scout Helicopters

Three Scout helicopters namely BO-105, Bell 406 and Hughes 530- MF were brought to Pakistan. We were looking for a suitable “Scout Helicopter” for our Cobras and simultaneously hunting for a helicopter which can look after the operational requirement in Siachin Glacier as well. If one helicopter can do both the jobs, that would be an icing on the cake. Responding to the General Service Requirement (GSR) multiple companies entered the field and after short listing, one German and two American companies were invited. The team detailed to evaluate these helicopters was comprised of following officers:-

|                                  |                          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Brigadier Sajjad Ahmed Nazim     | Officer In Charge Trials |
| Lieutenant Colonel Shah Alam     | Evaluation Team Leader   |
| Lieutenant Colonel Mumtaz Siddiq | Member Technical         |
| Major Pervaiz Iqbal              | Member Flying            |
| Major Iqbal Kashmiri             | Member Flying            |
| Major Arif Rasul Qureshi         | Member Flying            |

These helicopters arrived in Pakistan (Karachi) between 30<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July 1985 and were flown to Multan on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1985. Hereafter the evaluation and trials commenced and lasted till 12<sup>th</sup> July 1985. During the period of evaluation, the helicopters flew an average of 30.00 hours each and spanned the entire area from Karachi in the South to the Siachen in the North. The helicopters were flown in the hot and humid climate of Multan at 43 degree Celsius and were exposed to dry cold weather of Siachen at +2 degree Celsius as well. Later on Gazelle helicopter also joined in. Lieutenant Colonel Shah Alam, the team leader who had witnessed Gazelle trials and had flown this machine in Saudi Arabia in July 1984, utilized his previous knowledge of the machine to test and complete the comparative assessment. It was unfortunate that during the course of these trials one of the helicopters namely BO-105, crashed and burnt out at Gilgit.

In December 1988, Major Terry Cook of US Army visited Combat Group for the subsequent training of own Aero Scouts Pilots. In February 1989, an American Mobile Training Team (MTT) consisting of CW4 Terry Morrich an experienced Jet ranger pilot having instructor rating was the first one to report at Multan followed by CW-3 Anderson and Major George W Chappel, arrived at Multan, apart from this flying team, technical team comprising of three members also arrived at Multan. The purpose was to train Aero-Scout pilots for the Combat Group. Pilots were initially selected for scout training in early 1987 and 1988 and were given initial training on Jet Ranger helicopters at Qasim Base and later on were posted back to the fixed wing squadrons. They finally got the chance to get the training in 1989 after which they were posted to the combat squadrons. Six Jet rangers helicopters were made available for the training. American team trained pilots as Aero Scouts instructor pilots and ran two courses for aero scouts as well. Major Nazir Hussain Siddiqui was detailed as their liaison officer. Four officers were trained as instructor pilot on Aero Scouts including Majors Wahid, Arshad Farooq, Zafar Niazi and Hadeed Malik. Fifteen officers were trained as Aero Scouts pilots in two batches. Apart from flying technical courses including maintenance of AN/ARC-164 & 209, AN/APR -39 and ALQ -144, Vibrex System,



*Jet Ranger*







*Aero Scout*



were conducted. Aero Scouts is the lynch pin of Combat employment, in the employment doctrine of Cobras, the Air Battle Captain (ABC) fly in a Jet Ranger, it is his duty to find the enemy and to guide the Cobras towards the target, ABC has artillery gunfire under his command, it is he who decides what to engage and when and where to disengage. Thus the training and drills of ABC are nerve wrecking, he has to plan meticulously and has to be in picture of overall battle scenario.

## **First Firing & Exercise**

First aerial firing of AH-IF in Pakistan was carried at Muzaffargarh Ranges between 13<sup>th</sup> November – 6<sup>th</sup> December 1985. Exclusive firing range was selected for this purpose. There were four Cobras which took part in firing, two each from each squadron. The first tube launched optically tracked wire guided (TOW) missile was launched by the following crew of 33 Squadron:-

|                            |        |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Major Wahid Khan           | Pilot  |
| Captain Zafar Ahmed Saleem | Gunner |

Every body held up their breath till the missile blew up the target, it hit the bull. Major Tughral Bashir of 31 Squadron, has the distinction of missing the first ever missile on the same day. On April 21-23 1986, 33 Squadron moved out to Mailsi along with elements of 31 Squadron for the first ever exercise of Combat Group. “Squadron moved out to its first tactical exercise, and had to establish a camp twice in those two days. Every one put up a very good show, troops enjoyed sandstorm for about five hours. All their tents were affected except “Langar”. The field- mess was also put to test as it was catering for well over thirty officers.

## **General Zia Ul Haq in Cobra**

The year 1987 saw the largest Indian exercise near Pakistan borders, conceived by General Sunder Jee, the Former Indian Army Chief. Quick mobilization by Pakistan Army followed by the famous “Cricket diplomacy” offset the danger temporarily. Aviation Combat Group readily adjusted to the new concept of Air-Land Operations, The role of Combat Group stood prominent as firepower and manoeuvre were the primary means to challenge and fight the enemy

In November 1987, the Combat Group Headquarters, 31 Combat Squadron supported by the Maintenance element and the Forward Area Arming and Refuelling ( FAAR) Company took part in a major exercise Knight Rider of the Armoured Division. Tactical deployment was resorted to. The exercise was in two distinct halves. In the first half the COAS Pakistan Army and President of Pakistan General Zia Ul Haq, was shown the tank movement from an aero-scout (Jet Ranger) while during the second half he was taken up in a Cobra helicopter. During both halves of the exercise the Commander Combat Group, Colonel Riffat Beg Humayun, piloted the COAS. General Zia was flown from Marot Fort for Rodewala Toba. President General Zia was very keen to fly the Cobra, he was shown how to get into the cockpit by the commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Ashraf Choudhry who also carried out gunner station checks for him . Knight Rider was conducted between 15-30 November 1987, Combat squadrons (31 ) was to support the counter offensive by Army



Reserve South (ARS) ‘ Operation Room setting, operations and technicality was flawless, it was set up by Major Shahid Kureishy and Major Tughrul Bashir.....operations went on well and the air crews returned with a sense of achievement every day’, records squadron digest of service. The digest also throws light on the sports activities in the field ‘ Rest of the folks played volleyball in the evening, there was so much play in one game that the ball turned orange like a tangerine’. Combat Group set the traditions by having a camp fire at the end of the exercise , ‘ It was here we came to know about the musical links of Tughural Bashir, when he walked in with two funny looking Ustads and his typical laughter...Shahid Kureishy was a party to all this but after seeing the public reaction he confessed that he had acted just as a driver...it was a lovely evening which ended with jokes by Azkar Lodhi’.

During these field exercises which are uniquely different from other army regiments and formations in one fundamental aspect; a Cobra pilot is supposed to sleep early thus unlike other formations one seldom see lights in Cobra tents after ten at night. The soldiers who all are gunner are deputed for night guards and patrolling. The day starts much earlier; even before the fajr prayers because the ground crew all from EME have to prepare the helicopters for day mission by carrying out daily inspection. The fuel bowser crawling through the fields parked next to Cobras and Jet rangers doing refuelling, the sound of dosen Cobra start up is a harmony which mesmerises even a non flyer. Mess staff is also up as pilots are not supposed to fly empty stomach. The meteorological brief which is must before any flying is carried out is another unique feature of army aviation and Cobras. All pilots have to attend it irrespective of their rank and experience. Pilots are informed about the day’s weather and the flight schedule, emergencies are asked and discussed and it is a lively discussion in which no vague statement can be given, each and every word has to be precise and concise. This daily ritual is also attended by the ground crew as well.

33 Squadron was also out in the field much earlier than 31 Squadron, it was supporting the Armoured Division, the squadron itself was affiliated with 4 Armoured Brigade. Squadron stay in Multan was short lived as it again moved to Kharian in support of Corps exercise, President General Zia also witnessed the exercise but did not fly in the Cobra.



**President General Zia Ul Haq and Lt Col (Maj Gen) Ashraf Choudhry**





In 1988, the very first welfare project for troops was initiated by the 33 Squadron when it started operating its bottling plant, it was brainchild of Major Reginald George Foulds. Major George later after his posting from the Combat Group was the mastermind in opening Wings bakery at Qasim Base; after his retirement he shifted to USA and as luck would have it he is now selected for the very first mission to Mars by the USA through a volunteer system after the necessary medical check-ups.

### First Accident

On 31<sup>st</sup> December 1988, AH-1F # 020 of No 33 Aviation Combat Squadron, piloted by Captain Nayyer Iqbal and Major Mahmood Ul Hassan crashed in the training area. Miraculously both the pilots suffered no major injuries but the helicopter was damaged extensively. Well-earned credit must be given to the Engineering Group for rebuilding the smashed attack helicopter with intensive care and single-minded effort. It took some time but the mission was accomplished with ease and efficiency. To show the immense confidence in his engineering team, the rebuilt Cobra was test flown on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1991 by none other than the incumbent commander of the Combat Group, Colonel Ashraf Chaudhry and Lieutenant Colonel Shahid Jamil; the rebuilt Cobra saved a staggering sum of \$ 15 Million. The first ground accident also occurred in the same period when towing tractor driver accidentally put the reverse gear instead of forward gear.

**Zarb – E- Momin** was the biggest and largest ever exercise of Pakistan Army, it was also the first time that media was allowed to cover any such manoeuvre. Preparations for the exercise started in August 1989. Commander Combat Group was part of Corps during the planning or war game segment at GHQ, while Lieutenant Colonel Liaqat Raja who was commanding 31 Squadron was representing the Cobras at Corps. 33 Squadron moved out to Kharian for collective training with Armoured Division as a

## THE FIRST

- COMMANDER ARMY AVIATION COMBAT GROUP
- COLONEL RIFFAT BEG HUMAYUN
- COMMANDER OF ARMY AVIATION COMBAT GROUP IN RANK OF BRIGADIER
- BRIGADIER TIPU SULTAN
- COMMANDER 404 GROUP
- BRIGADIER SYED TAQI NASEER RIZVI
- SECOND IN COMMAND
- COLONEL SARFRAZ AHMED
- HELICOPTER 786 007 FLIGHT TESTED
- 31 JANUARY 1985
- FIRST BATCH OF 10 X AH-1F
- 9 JANUARY 1985
- MTP
- MAJOR SOHAIL QURESHI
- AERIAL FIELD F RING AT RANGES
- 13 NOVEMBER 1985
- TOW MISSILE WAS MISSED
- MAJOR TUGHRAL BASHIR
- USA QUALIFIED INSTRUCTOR PILOTS
- LIEUTENANT COLONEL RIFFAT BEG HUMAYUN
- MAJOR SALEEM AKHUND SJ

- IN COUNTRY CONVERSIONS
  - AQC
  - CQC
  - IPCC
- FEBRUARY 1989
- FEBRUARY 1992
- MAJOR DAWOOD AHMED
- MAJOR SYED ALI
- TOW MISSILE WAS FIRED
  - MAJOR ABDUL WAHID KHAN - PILOT
  - CAPTAIN ZAFAR SALEEM - GUNNER
- AH-1F 786-020 CRASHED IN TRAINING AREA
  - CAPTAIN NAYYAR IQBAL - PILOT
  - MAJOR MAHMOOD UL HUSSAIN - GUNNER
- NIGHT TOW WAS FIRED ON 27 FEBRUARY 2002
  - MAJOR NAEEM ULLAH KHATTAK - PILOT
  - MAJOR MUHAMMAD NABEEL - GUNNER



prelude to pre-army training for Zarb –E – Momin. ‘Entire Army Aviation Combat group took part in this gigantic army exercise, Combat units undertook unprecedented flying activity during this exercise to support the Blue Land as well as Fox Land forces’. The disposition of Combat Group kept on changing, in the exercise the two forces Blue land and Fox land were fighting a war, initially Headquarters Combat group, Group IV, 33 Combat Squadron, 2 FAAR Company and 351 Aviation Field Supply Platoon were placed in support of 8 Blue Land Corps, the Combat Group was deployed at Bandial near Khushab, which it occupied in the last week of November 1989. Combat Group headquarters in line with the war game moved to Bhakkar alongwith 33 squadron to support the operations of Fox Land forces. Cargo helicopters were also part of the Combat Group and they carried out the logistics requirement. Aim was to test and practice the shifting of sectors by combat elements. On the other hand, 31 Squadron alongwith 3 FAAR Company, Combat maintenance wing and 352 Aviation Field Supply platoon were placed under command Multan Aviation Base which was designated as Brigade and initially located at Pir Mahal to support the Blue Land Corps. One ‘Rebel Flight’ ex 31 Squadron was detached from the mother squadron and was deployed at Bhakkar alongwith 1 FAAR Company. For next two months debriefing of the exercise was carried, equipment and men were given the much-needed break. This exercise played a fundamental role in the evaluation of the Combat Group, its table of organisation and equipment alongwith doctrine underwent changes. ‘Hardly had the combat group recovered from the effects of the exercise that war clouds started looming over the horizon. The opportunity to apply lessons learnt during this exercise in actual conflict became a distinct possibility. Planning, co-ordination and preparation for possible war with India was started in earnest’. The war did not took place, however Combat Group was mentally and physically ready for such an eventuality. All out-station Cobra pilots were recalled and made current on the Cobra.

## Post Zarb e Momin

Nineties started with two major world events both having a direct impact on the Combat Group, first was the suspension of American military aid known as Pressler Amendment and second was the Gulf War. Prior to the Pressler Amendment, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had paid an official visit to America where apart from other issues , it was promised by Americans to supply another batch of twenty Cobras; however with Pressler Amendment coming into force in December 1990, everything became history. Gulf War major impact was the shortage of fuel for flying to an extent that even maintenance of currency for pilots became a critical issue. In 1990, the American suspended their aid to Pakistan and this brought to an end to the first phase of Cobras.’ *Flying hours of all US origin helicopters were drastically curtailed due*



*Brig Rahmat, Maj Gen Zafar Askree, Col Riffat and Lt Col Ashraf, Ex Zarb-i-Momin*





to this suspension.... only 25 hours per month were allotted to the entire Combat Group'. Annual aerial firing in such circumstances was carried out in June 1991, in which fourteen pilots participated, only rockets and cannons were fired. Another aerial firing was conducted in November same year. Maintenance issues like breaking of gun driver motor shear pin were faced; there were eighteen instances of it. 499 EME battalion rose to the occasion, it was able to change root end fittings of 42 Cobras blades from aluminium to steel fittings. In December, same year another landmark in self-reliance was achieved when 509 EME successfully repaired TSUs on 18<sup>th</sup> December and it was installed on Cobra AH-1F 003. In July 1991, Major General Rehmat Ullah took over the command of Army Aviation from Major General Zafar Askree; similarly Colonel Ashraf Choudhry took over the command of Combat Group from Colonel Sajid Ali in August. Flying Arrow III was the first major exercise of the new decade it was conducted at Mailsi (20



*Cobra firing 20mm Gatling*

November- 6 December 1991). Two aviation brigades were formed, placed under command combat group headquarters and Multan Base headquarters, each brigade was allotted a combat and cargo squadron each alongwith a FAAR company and field supply platoon. The FAAR and field supply platoons were moved from Gujranwala to Yazman for this exercise. Another large-scale exercise was held at Jacobabad Airfield known as Al Karrar, it was conducted by Corps and 33 Squadron, 1 FAAR Company and HQ Combat Group participated in it. Looking from present into past, there was a minor issue which became a bone of contention, the Combat Group had passed instructions for the pilots to carry their personal weapons, which somehow the other King Birds misinterpreted and they did not brought their weapons, but few officers did had and it was a delicate issue how to resolve it, in the end Colonel Shahid Kureishy who was the deputy base commander and Major Muhammad Tahir who was performing as GSO-II Operations resolved the issue tactfully. It highlights the overall culture prevailing in army, army aviation and combat group at that time, where carrying of weapons by officers was something which raised eye brows. At present, there are automatic weapons allowed by law to be kept in office, transport and in homes. In the last week of December 1992, the first ever Joint Air Attack Team (JAAT) live firing was demonstrated at Muzaffargarh Ranges, apart from Combat group, 18 Squadron PAF and 73 Medium regiment Artillery ex Armoured Division took part. This demonstration was witnessed by Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Farrukh (himself an aviator), GOC Army Aviation Major General Rahmat Ullah, and Commander Corps Lieutenant General Jahangir Karamat (later army chief). In line with the philosophy of self-reliance, it was decided in November 1991 that Cobra pilots will be trained in the country and it materialised in February 1992 when the first Instructor Pilot Conversion Course (IPCC-1) was run. Major Dawood Ahmed, he later commanded Combat Group but had to cut short his command due to ailing health and Major Syed Ali, he later commanded 31 Squadron and also remained as deputy Combat Group were the first two pilots to achieve this qualification within the country. Similarly, a Cobra Conversion Course CQC-1 was also conducted in which Majors Tahir Akram, Imtiaz Anjum, Arshad Saeed Kundi and Azhar Aziz Kayani were



converted onto Cobra, this group is more popularly known in Cobra history as Delta Force. In the same period Majors Abid Hussain Malik and Khalid Mehmood underwent Instructor Pilot Scout Course (IPSC); Abid later went on to command the 31 Squadron and Khalid retired as brigadier, he commanded Combat Group. Major Anwar Ahmed Khan along with Captain Mahmood Hussain and Captain Farhat Ali were the pioneer three scout pilots who were trained by own instructors. In October 1992, Major Muhammad Ifzal Tbt who was performing the duties of GSO-II training was qualified as Maintenance Test Pilot (MTP) in 499 EME Battalion, thus becoming the first MTP to be trained in country, all other three MTPs were qualified from USA. In 1993, Combat Group underwent change of command, with Colonel Ashraf Choudhry on promotion taking over Commandant Aviation School and Lieutenant Colonel Liaqat Raja who was already performing the duties of GSO-I Operations on promotion took over the command of Commander Combat Group. Colonel Ashraf Choudhry's Mushak was escorted by three Cobras and one Jet Ranger till the limits of own area; this was the first and last such send off. Few officers including Major Jamshed Bajwa (later lieutenant colonel) had a dissenting note on this and it was later decided that no such display would be carried out in future. It seems minor affair but the very foundation of Combat Group is such that difference of opinion is accepted, debated and then implemented. Colonel Liaqat Raja brought a drastic change in the culture of the Combat Group, he was from Cavalry (late President General Zia Ul Haq's regiment). Colonel Raja would often held discussions on operational matters in mosque with his staff and pilots; especially when deployed in field. He along with Lieutenant Colonel Saleem Akhund SJ would ride bicycles to come to office.

## **Combat Group upgraded**

On 18<sup>th</sup> June 1996, Colonel Tipu Sultan was promoted to the rank of brigadier and with this the command structure of Combat Group was also upgraded, however overall group remained undercommand to the Multan Base which was also commanded by a brigadier. Flying of flag on the jeep and office remained a sensitive issue. Brigadier Tipu Sultan was succeeded by Brigadier Hashim Khan on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1998. Brigadier Hashim Khan was the very first celebrity of Combat Group as he had participated in the most famous of all drama series focussing on army life, namely Alpha Bravo Charlie. Keeping in view the expansion plan of army aviation, it was decided and implemented that young officers will be given training on fixed wing and rotary wing within the aviation school and then posted direct to the rotary squadrons. In June 1996, the first breed of Combateers joined combat squadrons from Army Aviation School, they differ from the past aviators in a sense that they after training and brevet ceremony did not served in any other squadron but posted direct to Combat Group. Captains Zahid Anwar, Rehan Waheed and Asim Razzaq joined 33 Squadron, latter, rose to the rank of brigadier and commanded a combat squadron as well (35 Squadron). Similarly Captain Rizwan Mahmud and Captain Muhammad Azam Khan joined 31 Squadron; former not only commanded the Panzer but also the Combat Group. In January 1997, another batch of six officers was posted in to the Air Wolves and in summer of same year another four officers joined the wolf pack. Induction of pilots in Combat Group is a sensitive matter, in 2002, another step was taken when officers were trained only on rotary wing and posted to the cargo and combat squadrons, fourteen such courses were run by the Army Aviation School and later they were discontinued. In 2010, officers from fixed wing were trained in America on Jet Ranger and inducted in combat squadrons.





*Lt Col Ahsan Janjua   Maj Gen Rahmatullah GOC   Brig Tipu Sultan  
CO   Comd*









## Cobras in Africa

### Somalia 1994-1995

Somalia or Somali Democratic Republic, republic in eastern Africa, bounded on the north by the Gulf of Aden, on the east and south by the Indian Ocean, on the southwest by Kenya, on the west by Ethiopia, and on the north west by Djibouti. Somalia has been in a state of civil war and anarchy since 1991, when the central government was overthrown. The total area is 637,700 square Kilometres (246,200 square miles). Mogadishu is the capital and largest city. Somalia has a long coastline, extending for 3,025 km (1,880 mi), but it has few natural harbours. A sandy coastal plain borders on the Gulf of Aden in the north. A series of mountain ranges, with average elevations between about 915 and 2,135 m (about 3,000 and 7,000 feet), dominates the northern part of the country. To the south, the interior consists of a rugged plateau, ranging in elevation from about 500 meters (about 1,640 feet) in the north to less than 180 meters (600 feet) in the south. In the south, a wide coastal plain, which has many sand dunes, borders on the Indian Ocean. The country's two major rivers are found on the southern plateau, the Jubba (Genalē) in the southern part and the Shabeelle (Shebelē) River in the south central section. Temperatures usually average 28°C (82°F), but may be as low as 0°C (32°F) in the mountain areas and as high as 47°C (116°F) along the coast. The monsoon winds bring a dry season from September to December and a rainy season from March to May. The average annual rainfall is only about 280 mm (about 11 inches). Somalia is one of the world's poorest and least developed countries. The vast majority of the population consists of Somali, a Cushitic people. A small minority of Bantu-speaking people live in the southern part of the country. Other minority groups include Arabs, Indians, Italians, and Pakistanis. Some 70 percent of the people are nomadic or seminomadic pastoralists. The remainder are either crop farmers or inhabitants of the few urban centres.



*Arming of 20mm Gatling by ground crew*

The principal cities are Mogadishu, the capital, Hargeysa, Kismaayo, and Marka. Islam is the state religion in Somalia, and most of the people are Sunni Muslims. The official language is Somali; Arabic, English, and Italian are also used. Somalia has no railroads; of its 22,100 km (13,732 miles) of roads, about 25% percent are paved or gravel. Mogadishu is the leading port. A government-owned airline provides international service. Until the early 1990s, two government-owned radio stations broadcast in Arabic, English, Italian,



Somali, and several other languages, Before 1991 Somalia was governed under a constitution adopted in 1979. The overthrow of the central government in January 1991 left Somalia in a state of civil war, with no clear central governmental authority.

Somalia, came under UN operations since September 1992, due to ongoing civil war, the horn of Africa, became the focal point of the UN operations from September 1992, due to an ongoing civil war resulting in indiscriminate killing of thousands of Somalis. Responding to the UN call, Pakistan sent a brigade size force of ground troops to Somalia. In an encounter, on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1993 twenty-three Pakistani peacekeepers were killed in an ambush followed by shooting down of two American Black-Hawk gunships. Therefore, it was decided to have a combat squadron from Pakistan Army Aviation.

On 21<sup>st</sup> February 1994, General Headquarters raised Pakistan Combat Aviation Group comprising of 33 Combat Squadron, elements of 499 EME Battalion for provision of combat aviation support to UNOSOM. By 26<sup>th</sup> February the pilots and personnel were selected and lists were out. It was decided in principle to move the group in two phases with advance party departing on 4<sup>th</sup> March and main body on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1994.

After completing formalities within the country, the advance party comprising of eleven officers (Lieutenants Colonels Arshad Farooq, Faridoon, Shahid Jamill, Dawood Ahmed. Majors Muhammad Iqbal, Qamar Masood Pasha, Wasim Akhtar Malik, Mahmood Hussain, Syed Farhat Ali, Inam Karim and Captain Qaiser Mahmood) and 146 other ranks left Rawalpindi on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1994 for Mogadishu via Djibouti on a special UN flight. They were seen off by Major General Rahmat Ullah (General Officer Commanding Army Aviation) and other senior officers. On the same day a US Mobile Training Team (MTT) comprising seven flight and six aircraft/armament instructors also arrived at Mogadishu for imparting necessary training to Pakistan Combat Group. UN provided the AH-1S helicopters, manufactured during the late 60s which were later rebuilt to AH-1F model by addition of some of the armament systems and electrical equipment.

These helicopters had been preserved in Hawaii from where they were shipped to Mogadishu. Eight Cobras AH-1S helicopters arrived in batches of four each. The first batch of Cobras arrived prior to arrival of advance party and the remaining arrived on 15 March 1994. The training by MTT commenced with effect from 7 March 1994 and

*Somalia, the Horn of Africa was center of gravity of United Nation operations since 1992 due to Civil War. It became the focus of attention, when on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1993; the 23x Pakistani United Nation peace keepers were killed in an ambush. It was followed by another incident on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1993 when two United States Army Black Hawk Helicopters were shot down by General Aided forces killing number of United States troops. United States decided to withdraw its forces immediately after this incident and decided to leave Somalia by end of March 1994.*





finished on 18<sup>th</sup> March, six pilots of advance party were trained by the US MTT and remaining pilots were trained by Pakistani instructors. The maintenance training was also imparted by the US experts on the aircraft and armament systems to the technicians of the advance party. Own pilots before the flying training were flown over the Mogadishu in a US Army Black Hawk (UH-60) helicopter, this area familiarization mission was converted into an operational sortie as Somalians had hijacked a truck and as such UH-60 was directed to support the Cobras engaging them. In the training and conversion on Cobra the night mission was also flown on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1994, in another training sortie the Cobra came under fire from the ground, bullets pierced through its engine compartment and render it unserviceable for couple of days. The armament systems installed on the helicopter were standard configuration.

On 26<sup>th</sup> March 1994. Main body arrived at Mogadishu, hours after Americans had departed. Main body comprised of seventeen officers, twenty-four other ranks. Colonel Saleem Akhund, SJ assumed the command with Lieutenant Colonel Saleem Khan as his deputy, Lieutenant Colonel Hashim Khan TI(M) was the flight commander other pilots included Majors Muhammad Fakhar Ul Islam, Muhammad Shabab Khan, Muhammad Ahmed Rashid, TBt, Zafar Junaid Usmani, Sheikh Talat Mahmood, Abid Hassan, Hidayat Ullah, Jamshid Iqbal Bajwa, Ghulam Shabbir(flight surgeon), In the maintenance Majors Maqbool Ahmed, Mansoor Khan, Mansoor Ahmed. alongwith Captains, Shahid Nawaz Malik and Amjad Ali arrived. The transition training of pilots and maintenance technicians commenced on 27<sup>th</sup> March. Sufficient practice was given in aerial firing. In this regard a special mention must be made about the dedicated efforts made by Lieutenant Colonels Arshad Farooq and Dawood Ahmed, the two instructor pilots converted by the American MTT, had to fly almost non-stop to accomplish the assigned task of making all other pilots operational within ten days of their arrival. No separate training ammunition was provided, however, the US troops had left behind some ammunition, which was utilized to give firing training to the pilots. Pakistan Combat Aviation Group (PCAG) was organized into a headquarters with two flights, (one flying, other maintenance), flying flight had 29 pilots, six junior commissioned officers and 167 other ranks, whereas maintenance flight had nine officers, 28 JCOs and 253 other ranks.

## **Kiowa**

In April, five OH-58C Kiowa scout helicopters were acquired on lease by the UN from USA for increasing the daylight scout and reconnaissance capability of the UN troops. The helicopters were to be airlifted from Ramstein Air Base in Germany to Mogadishu after initial training of instructor pilots and maintenance team in Germany. To undertake this additional responsibility, ten scout pilots with the required team of technicians joined the combat group on 2nd and 3rd May by special UN flight. Scout pilots included Majors Razaq Chaudhry, Muhammad Tahir Raja, Tariq Saleem Khan, Syed Tassalimoon Tauqir, Muzzamil Tajmmul, Mirza Muhammad Aslam, Basharat Aman and Captain Anjum Hussain. Originally the training was scheduled from 14<sup>th</sup> June to 7<sup>th</sup> July in Germany, but due to certain sensitive issues, it could not be under taken and the UN decided to organize it at Mogadishu under a civilian contractor. On 30<sup>th</sup> August, three Pakistani pilots started their training and later also qualified as instructor pilots, They later converted seven other pilots and within ten days all pilots became proficient to carry out mission on this new type of helicopter. Their task was clearance of main supply routes, keeping an eye on suspected hostile groups and acting as eyes and ears of the gunship in addition to liaison functions.



**Eyes Over Mogadishu(EOM)** was the standard daily mission , armed reconnaissance with a pair of Cobras with a Kiowa acting as the scout on specified routes at varying times of the day. Initially three EOM mission of two hours duration each were flown during the day which were later reduced to two missions of an hour duration. Flying was curtailed due to non availability of spares which later became so acute that between 5- 15<sup>th</sup> October 1994 the entire Cobra fleet was grounded . Besides the standard EOM missions, a pair of two crew remained standby on half an hour notice throughout the day. The Force HQ would always prefer to have Cobras in air whenever any contingent in Mogadishu had to move or whenever mob, reportedly collected in any part of the city. The very first occurrence took place on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1994 when Lieutenant Colonel Shahid Jamil got disoriented on take off and helicopter skidded at full rpm and hit the revetment causing damage to tail rotor system ‘ in order to avoid embarrassment from the onset, the pilot was not blamed’. A day earlier an engine surge was experienced during an operational mission.

## Log Book

On 10<sup>th</sup> April, a combat mission was sent to Marka to help Moroccan troops busy in controlling the law and order situation in the city. Arrival of the armed helicopters had an instantaneous effect and the situation was restored to normal in no time. On 19<sup>th</sup> April 1994, 33 Army Aviation Combat Squadron was assigned the responsibility to support Indian Contingent south west of Mogadishu for rescue of seven UNHCR personnel held as hostages by Somalis. Two AH-1S helicopters participated in the operation. Operation was planned in the Indian First Bihar Regiment operations room at Kismayo. The Cobras proceeded on site and cleared the area. On clearance by the Cobras, four Bell 212 helicopters with Bihar Regiment troops landed outside the UNHCR compound and rescued the seven UNHCR personnel, while the Cobras provided air cover. Operation lasted for over two hours. During this mission the Cobras flown by own pilots crossed the Equator for the first time. From dawn to dusk the cobras flew nine hours in one day. On 25 May, a UN Bell-212 forced-landed in an area of hostile Somalis which could have resulted in an ugly situation if not reacted swiftly. Helicopters of the Combat Group moved quickly and cordoned off the area till the technicians repaired the fault on the ground and then all returned safely together. Gunner Saeed Ahmed while on duty at the PACG, on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1994, was struck by a stray bullet which damaged his spinal chord ; he had to be airlifted to Pakistan from Agha Khan Hospital in Nairobi in September same year. On 9<sup>th</sup> September, the Combat Group helped to extricate a battalion of Zimbabwe which was encircled by hostile militia near Balad while in the process of undertaking its withdrawal to Mogadishu. The withdrawal was accomplished without any casualty to men or equipment under the protective cover of the Cobras. On 21<sup>st</sup> September, two Cobras and two Scouts of the Combat Group were given the task to locate and destroy the militia jeeps mounted with anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons which had earlier fired at a Pakistani convoy in Mogadishu City. The mission was successfully completed and one Jeep was destroyed and other damaged. This was the first engagement carried out by Cobras.

Another mission was flown to support Indians on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1994, who were ambushed near Bald Eagle, resulting in death of nine Indian soldiers. Indians had gone to rescue some personnel but they themselves became the prey to the ambush. Indians later gave SOS message. The operation was planned in detail with the Indian force. Two Cobras were detailed to cordon the area near the ambush site, search and destroy the hostile militia vehicles. Cobras, with their weapons blazing, went in first and cleared the area, thereby making it possible for two other UN helicopters to land in the compound of UNHCR building and complete the rescue operation. As a result four Somali gunmen along with one 23 mm ack





ack gun were captured. Again, on 23 September 1994, a formation of three Cobras and two OH-58C was tasked to extricate a Botswana contingent. The UNOSOM had planned the refuelling at Badoa. Cobra formation completed its task and successfully extricated the besieged Botswana troops, on their way back formation again landed at Badoa for refuelling. Our cobras were employed on 6 December 1994 to extricate a Bangladeshi Infantry Company from Afgooye. This company was made hostage by Somalian war lord Mikitia. Rescue operation was executed early in the morning. Cobras fired 4500 rounds, and area was secured. On first February 1995, withdrawal of own 4 Sindh and 19 Lancer Regiments were given Cobra cover from Mogadishu city to airport. On 26<sup>th</sup> February 1995, last mission was flown over Mogadishu by Colonel Akhund and Lieutenant Colonel Hashim Khan on a OH-58 along with Major Mahmood Ahmed, Captain Anjum, Major Tehseen and Major Raza.

The entire Combat Group operated for over a year under hostile conditions and returned to Pakistan in March 1995. During this period some pilots were rotated after completing six months of tenure but Colonel Salim Akhund stayed there for the entire duration. In the first six months 1724 hours were flown which included 562 hours of training, including 66 hours of night flying as well. Subsequently in the remaining period over 1250 hours were flown mostly operational. Neighbouring Kenyan city of Nairobi was earmarked as the rest and recreation centre. UN flights used to take the troops for such purpose. Troops and officers were also accorded the opportunity to perform Umrah while proceeding on leave. To sum up the contribution of this group, it would suffice to quote a recorded remark of General Aboo Samah, the commander of UN force, “The task given is immense but the Combat Group has done a wonderful job to support the UN mission”. This mission was a great boost to the combat and scouts pilots; they were starved of flying and in Somalia they got a chance to not only polish their flying skills but also to interact with international community.

## **Sierra Leone-2001**

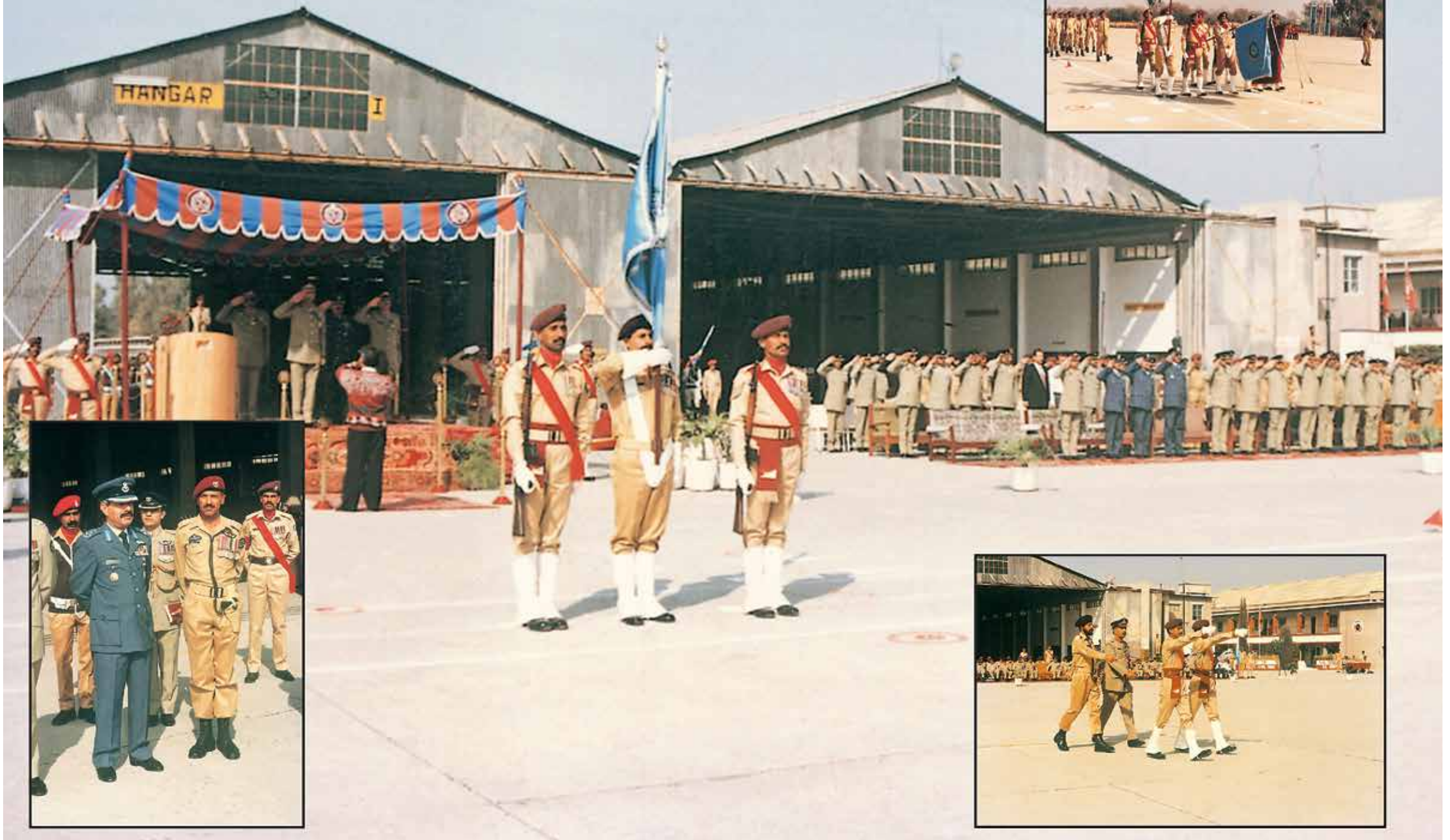
In May 2001, Combat pilots were again earmarked for tenure of duty in Sierra Leone, initially it was planned that AH-1F and Jet Ranger helicopters will be proceeding to serve under UNO. On 4<sup>th</sup> May 2001, Major Zahid and Captain Ali briefed UN officials regarding capabilities of Cobra helicopter, AH-1F no 786-20 was shown to the officials, similarly captain Mujtaba who had flown JR no 3927, to Rawalpindi from Multan briefed these officials. Pakistan Aviation Squadron was raised in which three Cobras and three Jet rangers were proposed, however it was decided by UN officials that Cobra gunships are not required thus only Jet rangers were flown and crew earmarked for Cobras were also inducted into it. Captain Ahmed Mujtaba Azhar, Captain Sajid Sattar, Major Asad Hafeez, Captain Mansoor Fazal and Captain Raja Muhammad Munir, Captain Muhammad Ali were among the pioneer pilots selected from Air Wolves. Captain Nadeem Yousef and Captain Rizwan Mahmud were the other pilots who proceeded to Sierra Leone. In August 2002, induction of pilots from the combat group was halted due to operational requirement although pilots from other machines were rotated. Lieutenant Colonel Khalid Mahmood (later brigadier, commanded combat group) was the commander of Pakistan Aviation Squadron, overall Brigadier Shuja Pasha was the mission commander. Brigadier Rizwan recalls ‘an advance party had gone earlier and we moved there later. It was conveyed that the mission commander (Brigadier Pasha) is very strict regarding the discipline, thus we shaved inside aircraft lavatory before landing’. Sierra Leone airport is on an island, own aviation squadron was established at Hastings camp, which was on the one side of the airport. Tin roof huts, wooden



barracks were raised, and five to six officers had to share one barrack, weather was tropical, main threat was from the Lasa Fever. It is the worst kind of malaria and death rate was very high, a person dying from Lasa fever was buried almost twenty-six feet deep in earth as a precaution. Troops and officers had to take Fensimef tablets to counter the fever; hallucination was the major side effect of this medicine. Later own squadron shifted to another camp which was a swamp known as Monyyaho, UN headquarters were also located here. The missions for Jet rangers were mainly casualty evacuation, liaison and communication or pay drop. Flying was single pilot; a typical pay would be around half a million US \$ and had to be delivered across the country. In one such mission , Captain Rizwan Mahmud flew over four hours, it was not the distance but the winds were so strong that he had to fly for endurance; as the refuelling points were very few. Jet Rangers were painted white with UN marking, they were transported in AN-124 transport aircraft; these helicopters were transported back to Pakistan in 2006. From 2000 onwards there was a sharp increase in the induction of Pakistan Army into UN missions and invariably an aviation segment was made part of it. Puma and MI-17 helicopters have been employed in Sudan, Central African Republic and Congo. Many pilots among the combat group and in army aviation have either been to Africa as part of Aviation contingent or as observers with the UN. Troops have also benefited from this deployment and its effects can be seen and felt through their improved living and working pattern. Bicycles have been replaced with motorcycles.



*Pakistan-Jordan, 31 Combat Squadron and 10 RJAF Squadron*





## Pakistan-Jordan, 31 Combat Squadron and 10 RJAF Squadron

In March 1987, Royal Jordanian Air Force team led by Lieutenant Colonel Sameh Hajjat alongwith Major Kamal Mustapha Al Turk and Captain Muhammad Helal visited Combat Group. Keeping in view the existing brotherly relations between the two Muslim countries, it was decided to establish a board of mutual cooperation between the Attack Helicopter units of both the countries. In October 1988, Colonel Syed Sajid Ali, alongwith Lieutenant Colonel Ashraf Chaudhry and Lieutenant Colonel Asif Javed Ghorri visited Jordan with an aim to see the Jordanian way of handling their Cobra helicopters and to learn from their experience. The visit further improved the existing cordial ties and it was decided to establish a formal affiliation between the units of attack helicopters of the two countries. 31 Army Aviation Combat Squadron of Pakistan Army Aviation and No.10 Squadron Royal Jordanian Air Force were selected for tying this knot. To formalize the affiliation between these two elite squadrons, a Pakistani delegation visited Jordan in June 1994. Major General Rahmat Ullah, then GOC Pakistan Army Aviation led along with Lieutenant Colonel Kaukab Aziz Bahtti, the Commanding Officer of 31 Squadron, Captain Muhammad Nabeel Khan the adjutant and Captain Hassan Sikandar Rana, the maintenance officer of the unit. An impressive parade was held at Amman Air force Base and Lieutenant Colonel Kaukab presented the Regimental Colour to his Jordanian counter part. Prince Abdullah now the King, Commander Special Forces Jordan was the Chief Guest on the occasion.

Lieutenant Colonel retired Nabeel Khan recalls ‘ Bulk of my squadron had gone to Somalia, I alongwith the other members took off from Karachi in a PIA flight and arrived at Amman via Abu Dhabi, we were greeted at the airport by the officers of Royal Jordanian Air Force, we were accommodated as state guest in a hotel. Next day we visited the Air Chief and later also visited the 10 Squadron which was based at the Amman Airport. I remained busy in the flag presentation ceremony and our GOC was taken to the different installations. The Jordanian officers were quite courteous , layout of their offices and flight line is almost identical to ours. We were not taken into the hangars,. However I got the checklists updated with the help of Jordanian officers. Lieutenant Colonel Kaubab Aziz was flown in a Night Vision Goggle mission by the squadron. The standard of drill was quite different from us ,all cautions were in Arabic which I grasped in this time. On the given day Prince Abdulalh was the chief guest, later we were taken around the stalls exhibiting the combat related items of the Jordanian Air force. We were also taken to the different sight seeing trips including Petra. Dinners were also arranged in our honour by the Crown Prince in the mess and another by the air chief which was in a hotel. Overall it was a great learning and I am grateful to my Jordanian brothers for their hospitality’.



*Lt Col Kaukab Bhatti with Maj Nabeel*



*Maj Gen Rahmat GOC Army Avn with Crown Prince(now King) Abdullah*





In order to complete the link in this chain of events, a Jordanian delegation visited Pakistan for presenting the Regimental Colour of No. 10 RJAf Squadron to 31 Army Aviation Combat Squadron. The delegation consisted of the following members :-

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Brigadier General Sameh Sulieman Hajjat | Leader of delegation                                 |
| Major Zaid S. Ayad                      | Commanding Officer No. 10 Attack Helicopter Squadron |
| Major Muhammad Yousaf. F. Ibrahim       | Second In Command                                    |
| Major Yousif A. Shehadeh                | Adjutant   |
| Captain Muhammad Ali Kaed               | Staff Officer to the leader                          |
| First Lieutenant Taha.M. Mushtaq        | Maintenance officer                                  |

## Colour Presentation

On 24<sup>th</sup> February 1997 an impressive ceremony was arranged for the Regimental Colour presentation by 10 RJAf Squadron to 31 Army Aviation Squadron. Multan Army Aviation Base wore a festive look with colourful buntings and banners fluttering in the wind. Relentless efforts by Commander Combat Group, 31 Army Aviation Squadron and all other members of Multan Army Aviation Base had made it possible to hold this parade in an unblemished manner. It required special efforts to make assorted men perform drill manoeuvres as if they were in the Pakistan Military Academy {PMA} drill square. The service of several drill staffs ex PMA were requisitioned for this purpose. It was also a unique honour for 31 Army Aviation Squadron to become the only unit of Army Aviation which was granted permission to carry the National Standard and Regimental Colours. Lieutenant Colonel Syed Ali records his admiration for Lieutenant Colonel Inam Karim( ex 31 Squadron) who was commanding 8 Squadron for a donation of half a million Rupees for the ceremony. It helped in getting new uniforms for all the soldiers.

Lieutenant General Iftikhar Ali Khan, the CGS was the chief guest on this historic event. Commander 2 Corps Lieutenant General Salah Ud Din Tirimzi, General Officer Commanding 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Division, Major General Ghulam Ahmed, GOC Army Aviation Major General Abdul Razzaq, brigade commanders, senior officers of the garrison, retired officers of 31 Army Aviation Squadron, Aviation Base Commanders, senior aviators, all officers/junior commissioned officers and other ranks of Multan Base attended the ceremony. The parade was led by Major Javed Iqbal, while the colour party was led by Captain Rana Ghulam Abbas. During the parade, Major Zaid S, Ayad presented the Regimental Colour of his squadron to Lieutenant Colonel Sayed Ali, who graciously accepted the same. The ceremony was crowned by the fly past of a combat flight composed of two scout and three Cobra helicopters. This was led by Major Mehmood of 33 Army Aviation Squadron. Jordanian delegation comprised of Brigadier General Sameh Sulieman Hajjat, Major Zaid S. Ayad, Major Mehmood Ibrahim, Major Yousaf Shahadeh, Captain Muhammad Ali Qaed and 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Taha M. Mutlaqa.

## Flying Brevet and Tayyarun Ababeel

In December 1997, Army Aviation conducted its biggest ever exercise, not only in terms of flying machines involved but more importantly it was the concept which was cardinal. Major General Abdul Razzaq GOC Army Aviation planned and it was conducted in two phases. All cargo helicopters were assembled and SSG battalion was also incorporated into the exercise. Aim was to practice all operations of war in support of field formations.

Another major exercise was Tayyarun Ababeel which was conducted 21 November - 6<sup>th</sup> December 1998. Initially the combat pilots carried out extensive aerial reconnaissance in MFI-17 aircraft. Extensive battle drills were carried out with the armoured formation thus providing the first hand experience to newly inducted combat pilots. Major Mirza Aslam the second in command of 31 Squadron was quite strict in the discipline 'his two achievements were fasting and personally ensuring the complete attendance at stand to timings in true letter and spirit. He did not mind if he had to even pull the pilots out from their 180 pounders bungalows'. During this exercise first ever night navigation along the border was carried out. In between these two exercises, both squadrons had undergone change of command, participated in the 23<sup>rd</sup> March Parade and won the 1<sup>st</sup> prize as well in aerial display (31 Squadron). Lieutenant Colonel Syed Ali was succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Tahir as Panzer Leader and Air Wolves were now led by Lieutenant Colonel Abid Hassan Malik, who succeeded Lieutenant Colonel Pervaiz Sultan Khan. Combat Group itself had a change of command with Brigadier Hashim Khan taking over from Brigadier Tipu Sultan in August 1998. Major General Ashraf Choudhry also took over the command of Army Aviation in July 1998, he selected Captain Adnan Anjum (31 Squadron) as his ADC.

**New Millennium** was a much anticipated milestone both for men and machine. The hype of machines working erratic on the turn of millennium were the topic discussed at length in crew rooms. Computers were still a new thing in Army Aviation and very few officers had mobile phones. Multan as compared to other cities lacked the infrastructure and was still shrouded in thousand years old life pattern, it would take almost seven hours to reach Lahore by road at own transport. There were daily one or two flights from Multan Air Port. Load shedding was there and uninterrupted power system (UPS) seems to be only



*Brigadiers Dawood (Right) Arif, Majors, Tassilimoon, Nabeel, Khattak*



*Maj Gen Ashraf, GOC Army Aviation*





solution. Accommodation was short both for officers and men and pilots were living for months in a single room with family in the Aviation Mess. Despite all this, life was beautiful in Multan, peace and serenity. Sports was the main relaxation both inside the base and outside, new grounds were being made, competitions being held among the squadrons which were fought with an aim to have victory at any cost. Security was lax, visitors could drive in at the mess or at the base without any hassle. Troops would move with weapons either to collect the pay or for practise firing at the far off ranges. In such environments the new Millennium was welcome, ‘Last day of 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium dawned with 31 Squadron in arms and its regimental colour, The millennium parade led by Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Tahir, followed by the prayers for the prosperity and success of Panzers’.<sup>3</sup> Captain Raja Muhammad Munir of 33 Squadron was blessed with a daughter she was the first baby born in new millennium, and Captain Azam of Panzer was the first one to get married; as far as Combat Group is concerned. In the same month Major Usman Shuja Khan of Air Wolves participated in Army Squash championship and won his third consecutive gold medal.<sup>4</sup> Army Aviation was being commanded by Major General Ashraf Choudhry, Multan Base by Brigadier Javed Iqbal, Brigadier Hashim Khan was commanding the Combat Group and he handed over the command to Brigadier Dawood Ahmed in August 2000; in August 2001 due to health problem he handed over the command to Brigadier Taqi Naseer Rizvi. A ground reconnaissance was carried of the entire area of operations by both squadrons. Panzer were being led by Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Tahir, it is worth mentioning that at that particular time, Panzers won as many trophies as possible including Football, Basketball, Volleyball, Hifz, Qirat and Aerial firing. Air Wolveres were under command Lieutenant Colonel Abid Hussain Malik. 33 Squadron had a change of command in August 2000 and 31 had in December 2000.



*Cobra on short finals*

In 2000 Combat Group started its own cable network known as Alpha Cable Network, it may be added that in early nineties Cobras had established a video movies library as well but with the incoming of compact discs, it became part of history. Within the base the traditional sugar-cane juice and sugar-cane kheer was a popular dish among the troops, it was served in the combat soldier’s cafe.

<sup>3</sup> Digest of Service, 31 Squadron.

<sup>4</sup> Major Usman later participated in inter service squash championship in Peshawar and won silver medal and selected to represent Army in National Games.

## *33 Squadron - 2001*



*Lt Col Tassalimon*

*Brig Hashim  
Comd*

*Maj Gen Farooq  
GOC Armoured Div*

*Lt Col Abid Malik  
CO*



## *31 Squadron - 2000*



*Lt Col Muhammad Tahir (Maj Gen)*



## Nine/Eleven

There are certain events and days in world history which affects generations, 9/11 was one such act when commercial aircraft crashed themselves into the commercial and military hub of America. American forces started bombing Afghanistan from 7<sup>th</sup> October 2001 and on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2001 the first ever US marine operation against Taliban was launched at Kandahar on 21<sup>st</sup> October American started bombing Taliban front line soldiers facing northern alliance in the north of Kabul. This bombing reached its crescendo on 5<sup>th</sup> November when American used daisy cutter bombs, Kabul fell to Northern alliance on 12<sup>th</sup> November and on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2001, the first batch of American Marines landed at Kabul and on 02 December 2001 the operation Anaconda was launched to capture Al-Qaeda. Pakistan Army responded to the new paradigm shift in international affairs and deployed its troops along the Western frontiers with an aim to monitor the cross-border crossing. Army Aviation squadrons played a key role in this initial monitoring of the borders. Frontier Corps troops were not only Heli lifted but also sustained logistically by the corps composite squadron at Peshawar. Simultaneously on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2001, Indian Lok Saba came under a terrorist strike and as usual blame was put on Pakistan; thus, the country, its armed forces and Combat Group had to fight on two fronts. Two operations were thus conducted, operation Labbaik was on the Eastern Front and Operation Al Mizan for the Western Front. In the wake of American operation in and against Afghanistan, Combat Group detached its flights and stationed them at Quetta and Kohat. On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2001, 33 and 31 Combat Squadrons started moving from Multan, one flight from each squadron. Ground parties including EME and spares had to move by road from Multan. ‘At last an operational move conducted...for border sealing and reconnaissance to avoid Taliban factions entering into Pakistan. The aircraft took off at first light and reached Quetta’<sup>5</sup>

It was the first time in the history of Cobras that they had to fly westward from Multan, weather at Quetta was below zero and at Kohat few degrees above. Cobras flew along the frontier but there was no worth mentioning event other than few entries in Cobras. At Kohat, Panzer Flight was stationed at the Signals Centre and had little flying, bulk of flying was conducted on the Jet Ranger mainly for reconnaissance of the divisional commander. In one of the incident the detained Taliban while being transported from Parachinar managed to overturn the same very police truck which was transporting them to Kohat, detainees simply shifted the gravity of the truck by sitting on one side of truck thus toppling it. Cobra Flight was called for an aerial reconnaissance.

## Operation Labbaik. January - March 2002

On 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2002, Operation Labbaik was put into operation, both squadrons were called back from the Western Frontier, only one Jet Ranger was left at Kohat for the divisional commander. Cobras landed before sunset at Multan but the ground party took a day in travelling back. 31 Squadron along with 4 Army Aviation Squadron, 499 EME Battalion, 3 FAAR Company and 352 Field Supply Platoon were placed under command the Combat group whereas 33 Squadron was detached to the Multan Aviation Base. Ten Cobra pilots were recalled from different bases and were made current on the machine and attached with squadrons in order to cater for any shortfall of pilots.

During Operation Labbaik which at that particular time looked as if a war is imminent between two nuclear countries. Major Kayani had flown a mission at Landi Kotal on 12<sup>th</sup> December at 1530 hours and on 14<sup>th</sup> December at 1000 hours in Jet Ranger 793, he was getting airborne from Bahawalpur with GOC Infantry Division on board for operational reconnaissance; such

<sup>5</sup> Digest of Service 33 Squadron, squadron flew to Quetta on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2001.





*31 Squadron under Lt Col (Brig) Anjum Irshad - 2002-2005*



was the swiftness in which Cobra squadrons redeployed themselves. Lieutenant Colonel Anjum Irshad commanding officer Panzers along with Majors Naeem Khattak, Nabeel Khan, Amir Abbas, Mohsin Ahmed, Malik Mumtaz and Mazhar Ul Haq, captains included Adnan, Sarfraz and Kashif, flew extensively in the desert with formation commanders including corps commander Lieutenant General Shahid and Major General Naeem. These aerial reconnaissance was the foundation of all the necessary modifications made in the operational plans of the formations. Desert keeps on shifting and as such it is not possible to keep maps update; low level flying affords the opportunity to assess the terrain and readjust the formations. Lieutenant General Zarrar Azeem who was commanding a corps in Lahore was able to carry out reconnaissance of desert and still managed to land back at Lahore before sunset.

In mid-March 2002, the situation started cooling down between Pakistan and India, however flights of Cobra squadrons remained deployed. Remotely Pilot Vehicle (RPV) was first noticed during this escalation, initially it was taken as Unidentified Flying object (UFO) however as a precaution drills were carried out. From 16-22 April 2002, Air Wolves operated from Rahim Yar Khan and carried out ground control interception (GCI) it was first such mission in Cobra history.



***Brigadier Taqi Rizvi (Maj Gen) Combat Group Headquarters 2001***





An Air defence alert (ADA) was established in which crew manned the Cobras around the clock, no RPV was hit but it was a great learning. Lieutenant Colonel Wasim Malik, Majors Raza Farooq, Amjad Mahmood (he was leading the anti RPV flight) along with Major Mohsin and Major Mazhar of Panzers carried out this drill.

The life in the operational area is quite interesting and pilots look forward to it, married officers take it more of a leave from domestic chores. Open air and area, living and interacting with troops which in peacetime is not that frequent. Living in tents, sleeping on camp cots using thunder boxes, working in lantern light, long walks at night, sitting around a camp fire and discussing daily flying and debating on the pros and cons of certain manoeuvres. The camp layout is typical as it was a decade ago. Soldiers tents and cook house, officers tents, a mess tent, an operational briefing tent, kote established in a truck, fence all around which is guarded by patrolling. Commanding Officer tent is traditionally pitched a bit far from the other officers for no other reason but to give more freedom to the officers. Stand to early in the morning in which duty officers inspects all the guards and helicopters parked in the open, ground crew making them ready for day missions, after stand down, every one consumes breakfast in the mess tent. This is an exercise for the mess staff as each pilot has his own brand and style of omelette and paratha, couple of tea cups and smokes. Met briefing and daily mission roster and day starts in earnest. In majority of the cases, cobras' take-off almost in dawn or pre-dawn stage. Lunch in the mess tent, an hour of siesta, games in the evening which is traditionally volleyball or just walk around the camp. Stand to in the evening and another hour or so in the operational-tent planning for next day mission. Dinner is taken usually at 2100 hours and lasts for an hour, everyone has to be fresh for the dinner, green tea after it and then commanding officer traditionally leaves the mess tent and soon all pilots would gather around and gossips starts and in another hour or so pilots starts hitting the camp cot.

## THE SAGA

- **1997** - **C-NITE MODIFICATION STARTED IN PAKISTAN IN COLLABORATION WITH AIR WEAPON COMPLEX AND 509 BASE ELECTRONICS WORKSHOP**
- **DECEMBER 2000** - **GROUP WON FLIGHT SAFETY TROPHY FOR THE MILLENNIUM YEAR**
- **AUGUST 2001** - **ONE FLIGHT OF JET RANGER HELICOPTERS PROCEEDED TO SIERRA LEONE FOR UNITED NATIONS PEACE KEEPING MISSION**
- **NOVEMBER 2001** - **COMBAT SQUADRONS EMPLOYED ON WESTERN BORDERS FOR ARMED RECONNAISSANCE AGAINST TERRORIST**
- **DECEMBER 2001** - **25 NIGHT VISION GOGGLES (NVGS) MADE COMBAT GROUP NVG CAPABLE**
- **15 JANUARY 2002** - **COMBAT GROUP DEPLOYED IN OPERATIONAL AREA DURING "ESCALATIONS" ON EASTERN BORDERS**
- **10 JANUARY 2002** - **ARMY AVIATION COMBAT GROUP RE-DESIGNATED AS "404 ARMY AVIATION GROUP"**
- **28 FEBRUARY 2002** - **NIGHT TOW FIRE DEMONSTRATION WITH INDIGENOUSLY MODIFIED C-NITE ACHIEVED 100 PERCENT RESULTS WHICH WAS WITNESSED BY "TOP BRASS" OF PAKISTAN ARMY**
- **26 MAY 2003** - **GROUP HEADQUARTERS SHIFTED TO NEW OFFICE BLOCK**
- **1 JANUARY 2004** - **404 ARMY AVIATION GROUP TOOK OVER THE RESPONSIBILITY OF "ARMY AVIATION BASE MULTAN"**



## C-Nite – Ability to Strike at Night

The very first lecture given on C-Nite was on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1988 by Major Shahid Kureishy ‘It was especially good for those who thought it was See Night’ such was the general perception about C-Nite among the aviators and other arms officers. In January 1997, Brown Amendment was passed in the American Congress which made it possible for Combat Group to receive certain items, important being C-Nite Kits for Cobra; few C-Nite kits were delivered. However, Combat Group was adamant to achieve the night flying and firing capability and work started on it. On 13<sup>th</sup> February 1998, Brigadier Tipu Sultan and Lieutenant Colonel Raheel Hafeez Sehgal SJ, flew the modified Cobra. Lieutenant General Ali Kuli Khan, Chief of General Staff (himself an aviator) along with GOC Army Aviation Major General Abdul Razzaq, Group Captain Shahid (Air Weapon Complex) also witnessed the performance of modified Cobra. CGS was flown in the modified Cobra by Lieutenant Colonel Sehgal. The work and dedication of 499 EME Battalion and AWC was appreciated by all. During Operation Labbaik, both squadrons kept on experimenting with the NVG and practiced them in short duration. In the absence of any instructor it was a remarkable feat. The work continued all along and on night 8<sup>th</sup> January 2002, 33 Squadron carried out first ever night firing with C-Nite, two TOWs were fired; however, it was not night firing in classic sense but still a step towards that direction. Lieutenant Colonel Waseem Malik and Major Hidayat Khan was the crew. This firing gave a great boost towards the ultimate goal. C-Nite project was geared up on the personal interest of Vice Chief of Army Staff (VCOAS) General Muhammad Yousaf mainly due to prevalent tension along the border. In such circumstances, the ability to hit the enemy armoured was the key. The project was jointly managed by 509 EME, AWC and 499 EME Battalion under supervision of Brigadier Taqi Rizvi, commander of Combat group. Major General Muhammad Azam, GOC Army Aviation was convinced and had a faith on the abilities of his pilots thus it was planned to carry out a night firing with NVG and there was no better time and moment than the escalation. In the meantime, from 25-26<sup>th</sup> February 2002, engineers of 509 EME team arrived at Multan and carried out mounting of a video camera on Cobra helicopter, aim was to evaluate the TOW missiles fire analytically.



*C-Nite Night (Maj Gen Azam GOC Avn highlighting to General Yousaf VCOAS)*





*Cobra at Night*



On D - day (28<sup>th</sup> February 2002), weather turned nasty with little drizzle and fog, under normal circumstances the flying would have been called off but the magnanimity of the occasion was such that flight safety was extended to the limits. Every passing moment was increasing the heartbeat of combat pilots, weather was getting bad, clouds and high winds were also endeavouring to defeat the strong will of pilots, however pilots taking part in the demonstration were unperturbed and determined to take on the assigned task. There were two flights of Cobras, two helicopters each, some adjustment in the crew were made due to the yesterday's experience. Major Nabeel and Major Khattak, Lieutenant Colonel Waseem Malik and Major Asad Hafeez, Lieutenant Colonel Anjum Irshad and Major Mohsin, Major Tehseen and Major Hamid were the crew. Lieutenant Colonel Waseem Malik was the formation leader. Four Tows were fired and they hit the target, also cannons were fired too. This was the first ever successful hitting of target at night by the Cobras. Officers including VCOAS General Muhammad Yousaf 'Joe', Lieutenant generals included Muhammad Amjad, Abdul Qadir, Mushtaq Hussain Shahid Aziz (CGS), Shahid Hamid, Major Generals included Rafi Ullah Niazi, Akbar Saeed, Javed Aslam Tahir, Ashfaq Pervaiz Kayani (later COAS), Muhammad Javed, Fazl-i-Ilahi, Safdar Hussain (later lieutenant general), Najeeb ul Zaman, Ahsan Azhar Hayat (later VCOAS), Muhammad Naeem, and Muhammad Azam GOC Army Aviation were among the spectators. The kind of applause that roared from the spectator stand was second to the emotions displayed when country successful conducted nuclear explosion. Combat group had given the army a new ray of hope at the most critical juncture and in which every member of the Combat Group can take pride, records the digest of service of Cobras. The news was displayed all across the media, television channels and print media gave it full coverage it deserves. Combat Group flew 373 hours of Cobra and 62 hours of Jet Ranger during this escalation, this includes 92 hours of NVG on Cobras as well. Major Asad Hafeez of 33 Squadron through his own ingenuity was able to build and made functional a field ATC.

In 2005 NVG training was conducted at Kohat airfield, in which Cobra pilots were trained. By end 2006, NVG was quite regulated and training was being imparted in stages. By mid-March 2007, Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Hamid had logged 155 hours of NVG followed by Lieutenant Tehseen Khan of 35 Squadron with 101 hours, Major Khawar Rashid had 58, Major Nasheed Iqbal had 43, Major Sajid Sattar logged 44, and Major Mubashir was having 39 hours of NVG. In 2010, Air Wolves under Lieutenant Colonel Abid Aziz made an endeavour to convert his entire squadron on NVG mission capability and on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2010, they became the first fully NVG capable combat squadron. In a span of year, it generated 510 hours of safe NVG flying.



*Cobra and Bell-412 taking off from Miranshah*



## Chronicle of Cobra Operations in War on Militancy

As the efforts on war against terror intensified, it was felt at highest level that desired results are viable if terrorist strongholds are struck with speed and ferocity; and that is possible only by utilising the medium of air. Thus the concept of air assault and Special Operation Task Force was evolved. Army Aviation did not have integral troops for such kind of operations and Special Service Group does not have the air wing, therefore these two elite corps were married. Exercise Fox Hunt was the culmination stage of their integrated training. It was the largest ever mutual interaction between these two and it validated the concept of air assault. An anti terrorist training was conducted at Quetta and later an exercise was conducted at Pishin Ranges between 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> May 2003. Panzer and Gallants Squadrons participated. Vice Chief of Army Staff General Yousaf witnessed it along with senior army officers. The exercise setting depicted air assault concept. MI-17 helicopters, heli-dropped the Special Service Group troops near target area, which had been cordoned by an Infantry Division troops. Cobras provided escort and aerial fire support. 400 cannon rounds and 26 rockets were fired in this exercise. Between 2003- 2005, quite a number of air assault operations were carried out mostly in the South Waziristan and North Waziristan. Cobras were placed under command Qasim Base with pilots on rotation. These operations were based upon intelligence with the main aim of capturing Osama Bin Laden and his close associates. Operation Tight Noose was the very first such operation which was carried out in close vicinity of Wana in South Waziristan.



*Cobras on North Western Frontier*

### South Waziristan Agency

Largest political agency among the seven agencies with an area of 6,620 square kilometres. Major tribes include Mahsud, Ahmedzai Wazir (Wana), Bhattani (Jandola) Burki (Kaniguram) and Dotani (Zhob). Agency is administratively divided into three sub divisions namely Sarawaki, Laddha and Wana. Militant groups include Moulvi Nazir group of Wana and Tehreek Taliban Pakistan. Counter militant operations started from this agency in 2001 onwards and prominent operations include Tight Noose, Zerakai, Kalosha, Eagle Strike 1 and 2, Rah e Nejat, Shawal 1 and 2. Combat Group flew 5138.2 hours. It was in 2002 that the first smoke of the insurgency detected in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where the very first such mission was undertaken under the code name Operation Tight Noose. SSG and Army Aviation for the first time became an integral force, although both corps had been highlighting the catalytic impact it will have on operations if they act together but, it was never really put into practice. One reason was the lack or shortage





of helicopters. In 2002-2003, American helicopters (Bell 412) were inducted, also a high number of Russian helicopters (MI-17) were purchased. A new concept of Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) emerged in which both commandos and aviators practiced the battle drills extensively. A battalion size composite force was raised, Commando Battalion was elevated to the status of SOTF, new and modern equipment was given to the battalion.. Tight Noose was the very first air assault operation which was carried out at Angoor Adda close to Wana in October 2003, two flights of Cobras were employed and the very first operational (TOW) was fired by Major Naeem Khattak and Major Nadeem Kayani. Bad weather compelled the abortion of first attempt in the last week of September 2003. Later the Cobras and cargo helicopters alongwith SSG took off from Mianwali and carried out the operation. It was the biggest heliborne operation till that time.; no less than 25 helicopters including MI-17, Puma, Lama and Cobras took part in it. Two flights of 31 Combat Squadron took part in this operation, five Cobras alongwith two Jet Rangers were utilised. Pilots includes Lieutenant Colonel Abid Saeed commanding officer Panzer, Majors Nabeel Khan, Naeem Ullah Khan Khattak, Nadeem Ahmed Kayani, Muhammad Tariq, Farrukh Ejaz Tehseen, Omer Mehdi Warraich, Naeem Amir Khan, Mazhar Ul Haq, Sarfraz Ahmed alongwith Captain Kashif Naseer Bhatti. Captain Muddassar was the in charge of light aid detachment. It was the first time that Cobras had operated and fired at such an altitude.

Later two more operations in the same vicinity also took place known as Operation Kalosha. Despite all the firepower and numerical superiority the army remained short of achieving its complete objectives of capturing the high value targets. Later similar operations involving Cobras , cargo helicopters and SSG also took place in North Waziristan most notable being the Alwara Mandi . For Kalosha, on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2003, a flight of Cobras ex 33 Squadron was placed at Wana, flight utilized 51 hours of flying during this preliminary operation of Kalosha. On 7<sup>th</sup> January 2004, all pilots and helicopters were mustered at Qasim Base. A total of 23 helicopters including nine MI-17, five Puma, six Cobras, two Alouette and one Lama were earmarked for this operation along with 210 Special Service Group troops. Necessary information and imageries of target area were provided by the Military Operation Directorate well in time.

This force was heli-lifted by seven MI-17 and five Puma helicopters to Mianwali Base by 1800 hours 7<sup>th</sup>



***Hot Refuelling during operations***



***Cobra Taking off - Manzai***



January 2004. Six Cobra helicopters also arrived at Mianwali Base before last light. In the mean while 3 FAAR company moved from Multan and established Forward Area Arming and Refuelling Point (FAARP) at Bannu by 0800 hours, on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2004. The night of 7<sup>th</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> January was spent for marrying up and arming the helicopters. Kalosha is cluster of houses on the bank of a stream north of Kazaha Punga. Mission itself was a partial success, although the main target was able to escape the area before the commencement, yet the show of force did elevate the status and prestige of state itself among the loyal tribes.

As the troops were proceeding back from Kalosha I on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2004, they were ambushed at Sholam. Thus in between the 8<sup>th</sup> January and 20<sup>th</sup> February, number of search and cordon operations were conducted by scouts and infantry brigade without any major success. This was the biggest operation conducted so far against the anti-state elements involving thirty-six helicopters including sixteen MI-17, five Puma, eight Cobras, three Huey, two Jet Rangers, one Lama, and One Alouette. It was conducted on 23<sup>rd</sup> /24<sup>th</sup> February 2004 in an area 12 kilometres South West of Wana. The target area was a complex of 5-6 mud walled huts located in the foot hills of a valley. 31 Squadron also notes in its Digest of service 'No eventuality demanded attack helicopters to fire'. Panzers had committed twelve pilots and six Cobras (two flights) for this operation and had remained attached with Qasim Base from 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2004 till the termination of the operation.

Kalosha-III was conducted in the same area and with same aim, to sanitize the area and to curb the anti-terrorist activities in South Waziristan. Major difference between this operation and the preceding one was in the increase use of force. For Kalosha-III, Panzer and Air Wolves alongwith 2 and 3 FAAR Companies were placed under command of Qasim Base. From 33 Squadron, seven Cobras and two Jet Rangers participated in this operation, whereas one flight from Panzers took part in it. Pilots included Lieutenant Colonel Raza Farooq, Majors Anjum Hussain, Abdul Hamid, Shahid Butt, Zahid Anwar, Asim Razzaque, Mansoor Fazal, Hamid Ali, Raja Munir alongwith Captains Muhammad Zubair, Khawer Rashid, Hammad Dabir and Yousaf Anjum. 258 hours of Cobras and 67 hours of Jet Rangers were flown by 33 Squadron alone in this operation.

## **Shakai- June 2004**

Operation at Shakai in SWA was a major operation in terms of troops and the helicopters, a wholly SOTF



*Cobra and Cargo Pilots in between Missions*



*Cobra during Kalosha*





operation, in which a commando battalion and anti terrorist company Shakai- June 2004 As the helicopters came in for landing, they were fired upon The search and clearance of the compound and the adjoining area revealed nothing as only one vantage rifle .303 was captured alongwith some ammunition Pilots of both squadrons took part in it, including, Lieutenant Colonel Abid Saeed, Majors Nadeem Kayani, Farrukh Ejaz Tehseen, Naeem Amir Azeem, Asghar Bangash and Mubbashir Mehmood. 211.7 hours were flown.

With operations in Shakai the very first phase of War on Terror came to an end, a peace pact was reached with the tribes. Later , Balochistan and especially the Bugti tribal area which is part of PATA was the focus of Cobra deployment.

### Formulation of Combat Doctrine

In August 2004, Brigadier Muhammad Tahir took over the command of Combat Group and Brigadier Pervaiz Sultan was posted out to Inter Service Intelligence (ISI). Brigadier Muhammad Tahir in true sense can be credited with commanding the Combat Group in operations. At this time in history, it was Qasim Base which was coordinating the operations in the tribal areas. Operations in Balochistan started in December 2005, operations in North Waziristan also commenced in earnest in March 2006. Thus, the dynamics of Combat support underwent drastic transition. One key factor was an operational sortie which Brigadier Tahir flew with Lieutenant Colonel Abid Saeed on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2004. *'I had flown to Mianwali to have a first look at the operations, my pilots and Cobras were deployed there. I am grateful to PAF for providing us with the administrative support but somehow the working culture of army and air force is not in line. They (PAF) had own limitations in accommodating the Cobra pilots and ground crew. In the morning, I observed our crew literally had to wake up at 0330 hours just to use the washrooms. I was supposed to fly on a Jet Ranger to Wana, but at start-up there was a technical entry thus I flew with Lieutenant Colonel Abid in a Cobra to Wana. At that time, the pattern was that pilots and Cobras were placed at Mianwali and were supporting formation at Wana from here and would fall back before sunset. At Wana, there were four Cobras including one in which I had arrived. I after meeting the pilots went to infantry formation and Corps Commander Lieutenant General Safdar also arrived. After operational briefing as we were having a field lunch, a message arrived. A company of a Baloch regiment had been ambushed near Sarwakai'. Town of Sarwakai is on road Wana-Jandola. Brigadier Tahir adhered to 'Spirit of Attack is everything' led the formation and reached the spot. He was in communication with the company commander on ground, the*



***Lt Col Raza Farooq Tamgha-e-Basalat - 33 Squadron***



***Lt Col Abid Tamgha-e-Basalat 2nd from Left - 31 Squadron***

company regained its composure after having four Cobras overhead. The convoy was rescued and Cobra formation flew back to Multan rather than landing at Mianwali.

Apart from the moving of Cobras close to the supported formations, the tactics were also pondered. One safety helicopter was also made part of any operation involving Cobras, Bell 412 or Huey were responsible for not only evacuating crew in case of hit but also started carrying ground commanders on-board.

### **Wana Flight**

On 21<sup>st</sup> October 2004, one Combat Flight ex Air Wolves was moved to Wana the rationale behind was to close the time between the action on ground and the reaction time of Cobras. It also saves the precious hours of gunships in ferrying. Major Nasheed Iqbal was the very first flight commander with Majors Abdul Hamid (he was promoted in August 2005 and took over the command of squadron), Shahid Butt, Raja Muhammad Munir, Kashif Farooq and Captain Zubair as other pilots; Captain Zubair received the good news of her daughter being born while carrying out pre-flight of Cobra at Wana. Flight was accommodated at South Waziristan Scouts fort, where a house was given which pilots aptly named as Cobra House. It was a three-room colonial style bungalow. Ground Crew was also provided accommodation in a barrack

next to the mosque. Cobras were parked at Zarai Noor Complex which was later named as Javed Sultan Complex. It is worth mentioning that Major General Javed Sultan Khan embraced martyrdom in an air crash during the operation; he was the younger brother of Brigadier Pervaiz Sultan Khan (33 Squadron). Wana flight had its first occurrence not in air



*Cobras taking off for a Mission*



## *Cobra in South Waziristan*





## *Cobra unleashing rockets*







*Cobra at Wana*



but on ground; Captain Doctor Sibghat on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2004, as a matter of good gesture was allowed to sit in the cockpit and resultantly the doctor accidentally blew off canopy arming mechanism. Pilots were rotated at Wana from both squadrons. During winter, it was an uphill task for the ground crew to perform the daily inspection in sub-zero temperature. Missions were passed directly by the formation. Initially there were not much flying, ammunition and spares were ferried through MI-17.

In 2006, the flight was move to Miranshah and another flight was based at Wana. Captain Imaad narrates that when he reported at Wana in winter of 2007, the flight had shifted to a smaller compound within the divisional headquarters. There were not enough mattresses for the crew, being junior most he had to wake up an hour before the others to use the washroom.

### **Sararogha - Eagle Strike – January 2008**

On 16<sup>th</sup> January 2008, Taliban attacked Sararogha Fort at night with 500-600 militants and overran after stiff resistance by South Waziristan Scouts, sixteen scouts were martyred and other twenty-four were captured by Taliban. The Laddha Fort was attacked by the militants on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2008, with over 400 miscreants, Laddha is near Makin the hometown of Baitullah Mahsud; militants also captured outpost of Saklatoi. Own troops which were facing the irregular fire from the adjoining high grounds held the fort despite suffering high casualties, they were now cut off from the main force and only Army Aviation was their last hope. Laddha thus became a matter of prestige and ego for both army and Taliban, the miscreants reportedly had nine 12.7 mm guns placed in a manner that any landing of air assault was bound to have high degree of casualties. The plan of reinforcement and evacuation was discussed at detail at all levels, Lieutenant Colonel Wajahat Ghumman put forward his plan, 'I after assessing the ground and the situation, had firm belief that surprise is the key, from a gunship perspective. On 20<sup>th</sup> January 2008, at 0825 hours the formation took from Mianwali, Plan was to fly, two nautical miles short of target to pull up, leader to engage the central and



*Cobras taking off in support of a field formation*





western miscreants guns and No.2 to take on guns on eastern side. At 0858, formation reached target area, , under this covering fire of Cobras, Bell 412s landed inside the fort and within minutes the casualties were picked and helicopters were air borne. One officer and twelve soldiers alongwith 600 Kilograms of supplies were dropped and six injured soldiers were picked. Formation landed back to Miranshah. There were only two bullets hit, one each on Cobra and Bell 412.

*By end November 2008, Major Shahzad of 31 Squadron had maximum tenures of 270 days in 2006, followed by Major Ahmed Farooq and Major Usman with 252 days each, Major Kashif with 202 days, Major Arif and Major Farooq having having 160 days. Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Rana Abbas himself had a tenure of 95 days in field. In 2007, again Major Shahzad topped the list with 179 days followed by Major Mohsin with 168 days and Major Ahmed Farooq, Major Naveed, Major Usman, Major Jawwad all having above 150 days stay in field. Not surprisingly Major Shahzad again had the maximum tenure of 55 days in 2008 as well.*

## **SOUTH WAZIRISTAN AGENCY**

**South Waziristan is a mountainous region of North-Western Pakistan, bordering Afghanistan and covering an area of 6,620 square kilometers. It comprises the area west and south west of Peshawar between the Tochi River to the north and the Gomal River to the south. South Waziristan is the largest agency of FATA. It has two headquarters, Tank in winter and Wana in summer. The Agency is divided into three administrative sub divisions: Sarwakai, Ladha and lower form of Wana. There are five tribes in the region; namely the Mahsud, the Ahmad Zai Wazir of Wana, the Bhattani of Jandola, the Burki of the Kaniguram area and the Dotani near the border of Zhob.TTP and the Mullah Nazir group of Wana are the main militant groups active in South Waziristan Agency. Major operations conducted are operation Tight Noose, Zerakai, Kalosha, Eagle Strike I & II, Rah e Nijat, Shawal I and II. A total of 5138.2 hours were flown till February 2016.**

## Induction of more Cobras and Raising of Air Mustangs

In 2004, American offered Pakistan Army Aviation twenty Cobras, however these were not the new Cobras rather they were refurbished. In November 2005, a Pakistani team headed by Lieutenant Colonel Tariq Jalil (later Brigadier), along with Major Nabeel Khan ex 31 Squadron, a maintenance test pilot on Cobra, arrived at New York and later flown to Puerto Rico where the Cobras were being refurbished. This was the visual inspection team, it also included Major Suhail Zafar (brigadier now) along with two technicians, one for the armament and other for airframe. Puerto Rico is the poorest among all American States. The system in America is such that the civilian contractors are hired to refurbish the Cobras and then to transport them to the designated country. The company Dyna Corps was responsible for Pakistani Cobras, they had chosen Puerto Rico for the sole reason that labour is



*Bell AH-1F is 53 feet long with a rotor diameter of 44 feet with a height of 13.6 inches. Its empty weight is 2,993 kilogram, maximum speed 149 knots & range of 274 nautical miles*





much cheaper here as compared to other states. It was an old naval base Aguidlla, where the factory was located, just on the other side of the airport. Colonel Rutherford an American officer also accompanied the team to Puerto Rico and later a liaison officer was also appointed to help the Pakistani team. Team stayed for five days, they were allowed to have only visual inspection and no ground run was permitted during this inspection. During this short stay, the team found no less than one hundred and eighty odd entries in the papers related to the Cobra, only one Cobra serial number 021 was inspected. There were discrepancies in the hours logged and similar queries.

In May 2006, the same team flew back to Puerto Rico via New York, a flight of two and half hours. The team had to inspect not only visually but also carry out air tests of eight Cobras within a time period of 48 days. There were two American crew members also among whom one was a pilot and had instructor rating on Cobra, both were US Army retired persons. Each Cobra had to be first visually inspected then given a ground run for 40 minutes and later its performance checked in flying manoeuvres lasting well over an hour by Major Nabeel and the American pilots overhead the field. As per the American rules, a Cobra IP cannot carry out Maintenance Test pilot's duties; their currency lasts for sixty days. It was a meticulous task; every day new entries were being made and it compelled the company to hire some crew and technicians again to remove these entries. Every week a report was sent to the General headquarters on the progress, ultimately it took 148 days for the acceptance of eight Cobras. Two Cobras were painted in camouflage and remaining were done in the already existing colour scheme of Cobras. These Cobras were air lifted through a C-5 and delivered at Chaklala airport from where they were flown to Qasim base. In the next batch Lieutenant Colonel Tehseen and Lieutenant Colonel Tariq Jalil again reached Puerto Rico in mid May 2007 for the acceptance of remaining Cobras.

In the meantime, in June 2006, an American team visited Multan Base to carryout feasibility study of conducting NVG training for Pakistani pilots at Multan Base. Another team comprising of members from Northrop Grumman visited the base for the upgrading of avionics in Cobra. Another important transition was the change of command in the Combat Group, Brigadier Khalid Mahmood took over the command from Brigadier Muhammad Tahir; Brigadier Khalid was not qualified on Cobra thus he had to undergo a conversion cadre from 10-29 July 2006 which he qualified. This was the second time in the history of Cobras that commander had to undergo a conversion cadre.

An induction ceremony for the refurbished Cobra helicopters was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> February at Qasim Base in which the American Ambassador Patterson handed over the helicopters to Major General Taqi Rizvi Director General Army Aviation. On 16<sup>th</sup> February 2007 another ceremony was held at Multan Base in which Lieutenant General Sikander Afzal was the chief guest, he was commanding the corps at Multan. Keys of Cobra helicopters were handed over to Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Tehseen and Lieutenant Colonel Ejaz Ahmed. In April 2007, Vice Chief of Army staff General Ahsan Saleem Hayat visited the Combat Group and witnessed the first firing of these refurbished Cobras.

## **Raising of Air Mustang**

35 Squadron was allotted the Cobras in January 2004, they were allotted five Cobras and three Jet Ranger helicopters. In August same year Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Tehseen Khan was appointed as the first commanding officer; this was all on paper. In May 2005, the squadron location was deliberated and Gujranwala and Multan were the two places under consideration. The formal raising order of the squadron was issued on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2005 and Lieutenant Colonel Tehseen took over the command on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2005. Major Suhail Khan and Captain Kamran Ahmed were first two officers who reported to the squadron, which had only two rooms. Seventeen officers including three captains were







posted but it took almost another year before the strength was completed. Majority of the posted officers were attached with Panzers and Air Wolves. Among the soldiers, Havildar Muhammad Shahbaz and Gunner Abdul Sattar were the first two to report to this newly raised squadron. Major Faisal Kamal has the honour to be the first officer who got married on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2005. Months after raising, squadron carried out its first ever aerial field firing from 15-20 October 2005. In the same month all officers of the squadron including commanding officer were attached and took part in *Operation Life Line* which lasted till 11<sup>th</sup> March 2006. 'Major Anjum Hussain was the first officer who donated Rupees one thousand to the squadron. First computer was gifted by 499 EME Battalion, however its monitor was capable of changing its colour at its own quite frequently, records squadron digest of service.

Operationally, squadron officers; Lieutenant Colonel Tehseen, Major Nadeem Kayani and Major Shahid Butt took part in the NVG training which was being conducted at Kohat on 19<sup>th</sup> February and later these officers were part of the crew that saw action at Saidgi; thus Operation Saidgi was the First Blood of the squadron and it justified its existence. Again on 5<sup>th</sup> March these pilots took part in night engagement overhead Miranshah, later on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2006, Lieutenant Colonel Tehseen and Major Nadeem Kayani participated in a night operation at Khatti Killi.

Brigadier Muhammad Tahir, Combat Group Commander on his farewell visit on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2006, praised the squadron 'heartening to see the squadron a well knit team lead by CO has made it all possible in record time'. By end October 2006, squadron was still short of manpower; it had only 90 soldiers and was still not having a cook house of its own.

January 2007 can be considered as the true raising month of the squadron as it was allotted three Cobras. These Cobras were flown from Qasim to Multan by the crew of 35 Squadron and later in the induction ceremony mentioned earlier were handed over to them. Captain Imaad Hussain Siddiqui was the first officer to be posted from the Aviation school after Rotary Wing Conversion-80.

Air Mustangs is different from other combat squadrons in one major manner, it was the first combat squadron which was and is commanded by a colonel. After Lieutenant Colonel Tehseen, command was taken over by Lieutenant Colonel Wajahat



*Air Mustangs at Samungli*





**OP AL - MIZAN  
(TERAH VALLEY)**

MAJ MUDASSAR RAZZAQ SHAHEED



MAJ KASHIF ANWAR  
CAPT IMAAD SIDDIQUI  
MAJ IMRAN AKHTAR  
MAJ FAHAD MUSTAFA  
MAJ ALI RAJ  
MAJ SALMAN MUNIR MALIK

LT COL MUHAMMAD IMRAN  
MAJ RAJA MUSTAFA ABBAS  
MAJ RASHID JAFFAR  
CAPT MUHAMMAD AFTAB QAMMAR  
MAJ MOAZAM JAVED



**OP SAID GAI  
(SAID GAI)**  
LT COL TEHSEEN KHAN



**OP EAGLSTRIKE I & II  
(LADDAH)**  
LT COL WAJAHAT GHUMAN



**OP RAH-E-RAST  
(BUNAIR)**  
MAJ KHALID MAOOZ



MAJ KHALID MAOOZ  
MAJ SANAULLAH  
CAPT REHAN ALI  
CAPT FURQAN KHALIL  
CAPT MUHAMMAD AWAIS  
MAJ SALMAN OMER

MAJ SOHAIL KHAN  
LT HASEEB ULLAH  
LT COL ASIM RAZZAQ  
MAJ SAJID RAZA  
CAPT JAUHAR AYUB  
MAJ IFTIKHAR AHMED



#### SOUTH WAZIRISTAN

|              |               |            |
|--------------|---------------|------------|
| WANA         | JANDOL        | MANAZAI    |
| SARA ROGA    | SHAKAI VALLEY | LADDAH     |
| SHIN WARSAK  | SERWEKAI      | LEH FORT   |
| CHAK MALAI   | MAZAKAI       | TIARZA     |
| SANZILA      | MAIDAN ALGAT  | KHAN KOT   |
| BARWAND      | KANI GRAM     | AM RANG    |
| ANGOR ADDA   | SARKANDA      | TANAI      |
| ASMAN MANZA  |               | VALLEY     |
| KOT KAI      | TAKRAISAR     | KEE        |
| JANATA       | JINAI SAR     | WANGI      |
| SPIN JAMAT   | SHERWANGI     | A NARAI    |
| GHUT GHUNDAI | SMN PANGA     | LUNDAI NUR |

#### KURRAM

|            |       |      |
|------------|-------|------|
| PARACHINAR | THAL  | JOGI |
|            | SADDA |      |

#### ORAKZAI

|        |         |        |
|--------|---------|--------|
| KALAYA | GHILJU  | SAMANA |
| TERAH  | MIRASAR | DABORI |

#### KHYBER

|        |             |        |
|--------|-------------|--------|
| JARABI | LANDI KOTAL | JAMRUD |
|--------|-------------|--------|

#### BALUCHISTAN

|          |        |             |
|----------|--------|-------------|
| SIBI     | KALAT  | SUI         |
| DEBBUGTI | GWADAR | JACKOB ABAD |

#### BAJAUR

##### LOI SAM

|               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| FEROZ CHAPPAR | KHAR       |
| AMA DOLA      | NAWAGAI    |
| MATTAK        | TANG KHATA |
| RASHA KAI     | INAYA QILA |

#### MOHMAND

|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| GHALANI       | ZIARAT        |
| NAWA PASS     | WALI DAD      |
| MOMAD GHAT    | MARJANA       |
| MATARI VALLEY | GULUNA VALLEY |
| SURANG VALLEY | LAKRAO        |

#### MALAKAND

|  |          |
|--|----------|
|  | SHANOZAI |
|  | THANA    |

#### NORTH WAZIRISTAN

|            |            |             |
|------------|------------|-------------|
| MIRAN SHAH | DATTA KHEL | DABBAR      |
| TUTNARAI   | HASSU KHEL | MIR ALI     |
|            | MANA       | PASH ZIARAT |
| WACHA BIBI | GHARLA MAI | DAWATOI     |
| SAID GAI   | RAZMAK     | DOSA        |
| MACHIS     | GURBAZ     | SPIN WAM    |

#### SWAT

|              |             |               |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| MALAM JABBA  | MINGORA     | KHAWAZA KHELA |
| BANDA        | SHANGLA     | NAJIA TOP     |
| DHURUSHKHELA | TUTAN BANDA | MATTA         |
| SHALAPLUM    | PEUCHAR     | MADYAN        |
| KUZA BANDA   | CHAPRAIL    | KANJU         |
| UCHRAISAR    | KABBAL      | CHAR BAGH     |

#### FR KOHAT / FR BANNU

|              |       |           |
|--------------|-------|-----------|
| DARRA ADAM K | HANGU | JANI KHEL |
|--------------|-------|-----------|

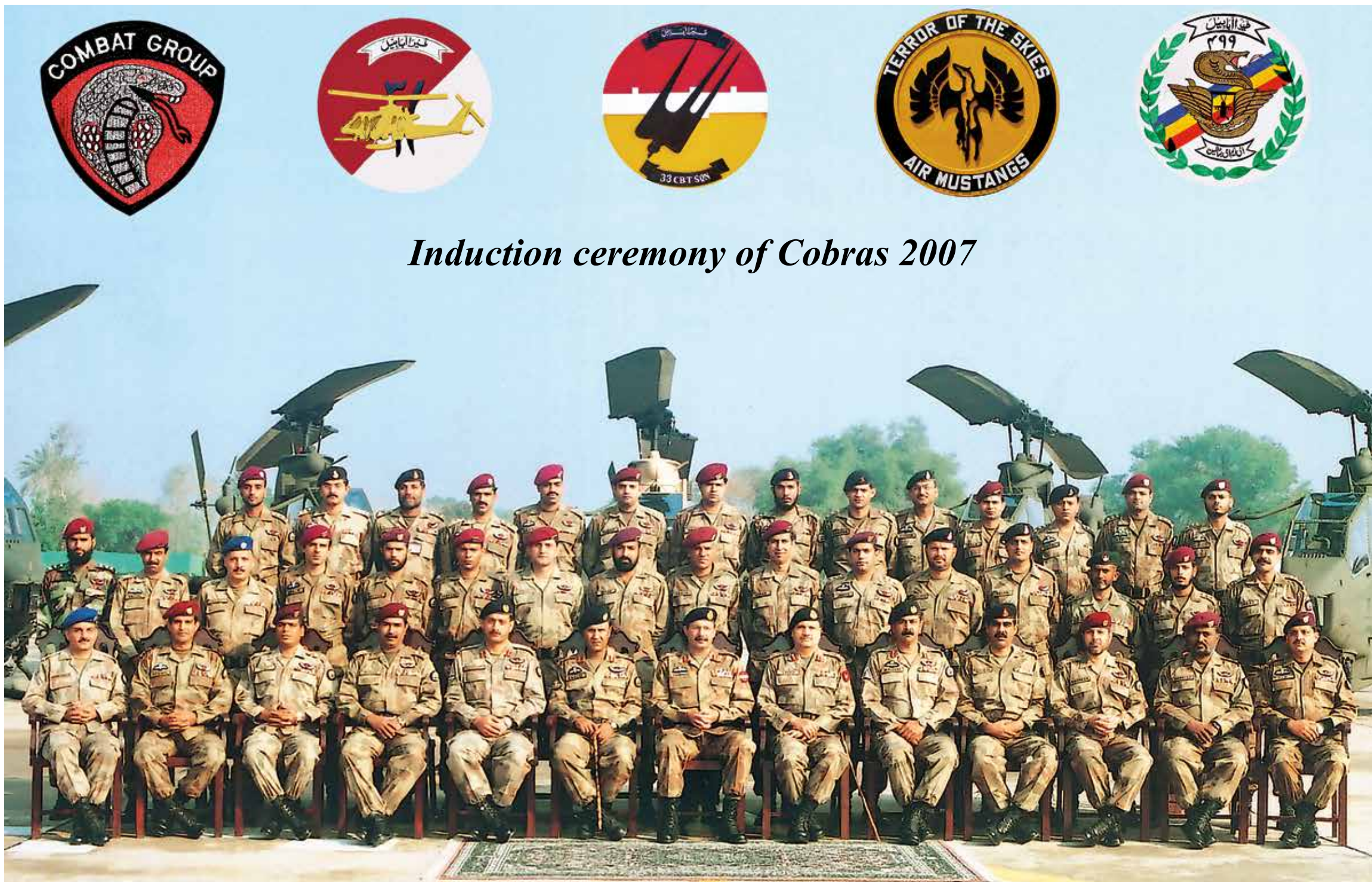
#### BUNAIR

|                 |            |        |
|-----------------|------------|--------|
| PIR BABA ZIARAT | SULTAN WAS | DAGGAR |
|-----------------|------------|--------|

#### DIR

|          |          |            |
|----------|----------|------------|
| LAL QILA | KAL PANI | TAMAR GRAN |
|----------|----------|------------|





## *Induction ceremony of Cobras 2007*

*Brig Khalid      Lt Gen Sikandar*  
*Cbt Gp      Commander II Corps*





Ghumman in July 2007 and in August the command baton was passed to Lieutenant Colonel Asim Razzaq in August 2009. By this time squadron had been decorated with two Tamgha -e- Basalat and had flown over 2000 operational flying hours. In 2011, Lieutenant Colonel Rehan Waheed took over the command and in August 2012, Colonel Wajahat Ghumman took over the command as full colonel having three Lieutenant Colonels under him as flight commander and in September 2014, he handed over the command to Colonel Asim Razzaq. Colonel Asim Razzaq handed over command to Col Nadeem Yousaf in August 2016. Present commander Colonel Zubair took over in June 2017. Thus it can be seen that Air Mustangs have a very different growth pattern as compare to the other two squadrons.

As all the officers posted in 35 Squadron were either from 31 or 33, thus they brought with them their experience and culture in 35 thus a new culture of Cobras evolved; a culture in which they had no rival. Unlike the raising of other two squadrons in 1985, this raising was carried out during operations thus an operational culture matured. Experiment of having a colonel command has paid its dividends and Air Mustang has set the pattern.

## **Royal Jordanian Cobras**

In February 2009, RJAF offered sixteen AH-1F Cobras for sale. In November, same year own team of pilots and technicians arrived at Amman for initial assessment, detailed inspection was carried out in February 2010. During Chief of General Staff (CGS) visit to Jordan a memorandum of understanding was signed between Pakistan Army and RJAF. Thus, in August 2011, acceptance inspection of Cobras was carried out and in September 2012, our pre-shipment team was in Amman for the move of helicopters to Pakistan. These Cobras finally arrived at Chaklala on 27-30 September 2012 in fully assembled condition in AN-124 and were flown to home base on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2012.

## **Cobras in Balochistan**

Balochistan is Pakistan's largest province and geologically it's the oldest tracing in its origin to the ice age. Baloch literary means wanderer and beyond doubt only he would have settled at a place which many historians have termed as the living hell. Balochistan covers an area over 347,000 square kilometres (larger than England) with a population of 4.3 million (5.14% of Pakistan's total population). The average population density of 12 persons per kilometre is one of the lowest in the world. Province is mainly barren, rugged, deserted and mountainous. Annual rain fall is 2-4 inches and temperature soars to 55 degree Celsius in summers and dropping to below zero in winters. In north it is bounded by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, on the west is Afghanistan and Iran, in the south a coastline of over 470 miles with Arabian Sea and towards east are Sind and Punjab. Balochistan is like a big bowl protected by mountain ranges all around varying from 2000 meters to 4000 meters and only through passes military forces can enter. Province can be divided into three distinct linguistic groups, namely Pakhtuns in the North and along Durand Line, Brahuais are about 0.9 million and occupy coastline and central area including Kalat, Kharan, Makran, Bela and speak Brahui. The third is the Baloch tribes from which the province derives its name are settled along the western mountain ranges of Indus Valley. They claim their descent from Aleppo of Syria and have population of 0.7 million. The chief tribes are 'Bugtis' and 'Marris'. In the absence of agricultural land they live nomadic life. All along Balochistan they follow tribal bonds of honour.









PAKISTAN ARMY

786046

*Cobras ex Royal Jordan were inducted  
in Pakistan Army Aviation - 2012*





*Cobras in*





*Balochistan*





## Operation Hifazat

To protect strategic installations and established states writ in general area Sui, dedicated combat and cargo aviation support was provided from 12 January to 24 August 2005. Though extensive flying did not take place, however mere presence of aviation assets created the requisite deterrence for the miscreants and radiated strategic effects. On 17<sup>th</sup> March 2005 a flight of Air Wolves under Major Abdul Hamid was flown to Sukkur to carryout punitive action after an army convoy was ambushed near Sui. Cobras comprising of crew from both squadron was placed at Jacobabad. They were housed in a bachelor quarters inside the base, pilots include Major Rizwan Mahmud (commanded Combat Group), Captains Mubbashir, Bhatti and Arif Shafique. Bell was also placed at Jacobabad.

## North Waziristan

North Waziristan Agency (NWA) have an area of 4,707 square kilometres with a population of 3, 61,246 (1998 census) There were 192,432 males and 168,814 females in the agency. Literacy rate being 13% among males and 0.5% among females. Population density was 77 persons per square kilometres. Only South Waziristan Agency had a lower density rate then NWA among the seven agencies (SWA have an area of 6,620 square kilometres with a population of 4,29,841).<sup>1</sup> The Uthmanzai Wazir still formed 59% of population, Daur 39% with Mahsud forming the remainder. North Waziristan political agency is historically the most violent among all the tribal areas, reason lies in the tribal composition, due to Durand Line, certain clans of Wazir tribes were divided into Afghanistan and then British India. Furthermore this was the territory which Amir Abdur Rehman was reluctant to hand over to the British India. Within the NWA, there are two main tribes Wazir and Daurr and both have historical, ethnical and financial reasons to start a feud at moment. Wazir treats Daur as a hamsaya tribe and thus inter tribe marriages are rare . It was Daur tribe which negotiated a treaty with the British in 1895 and thus allowed the British to establish a foothold in the agency.

## BALUCHISTAN

Balochistan is geographically the largest of the four provinces at 347,190 square kilometers. The landscape of Balochistan is composed of barren, rugged mountains and fertile, but dry land. Most of the land is barren, particularly on the Iranian and Afghan side of the region, and it is generally sparsely populated. In the south (Makran) lies the desert. Tacit foreign support available to different terrorist groups facilitated by porous border, compelled LEAs to undertake operations off and on and are likely to continue in foreseeable future. Major operations undertaken are operation Destiny, XYZ, ABC and no of IBOs. A total of 2540 hours were flown till February 2016.

<sup>1</sup> 103 Infantry Brigade analysis of the FATA, 2011.



## Special Operations Task Force - 2005

By the end of 2004, the focus of operations shifted from South Waziristan to North Waziristan and from July 2005, army took over the operational control of the NWA. Direct Snap Action (DSA) tactics were adopted, which incorporates aviation, swift insertion of commandos through helicopters, close to the target from multiple directions and extrication of force again through helicopters; all within a time period of thirty odd minutes.. Direct snap actions were conducted at Dewgar on 4/5<sup>th</sup> March 2005 and also in vicinity of the border without yielding anything worth mentioning. On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005 another SOTF operation was carried out in Madda Khel area, eight helicopters took part in it, 120 SSG troops were Heli landed, two Cobras provided aerial cover, however no ammunition was fired by Cobras.

### Tut Narai

Tut Narai is a small but an important post on the track Datta Khel-Razmak, it is located approximately forty odd miles south west of Miranshah at an altitude of 3400 feet. The post itself is astride the track and is a complex of three posts, two on one side and one check posts on the other side. Its importance is in checking all vehicular movement towards the Razmak from Datta Khel. In 1940s the post was duped by the outlaws when they entered the post dressed as women under veil. However, in 2006, the militants attacked it in the hours of darkness and soon posts sent a SOS to the Miranshah, where Tochi Scouts passed the distress call to army.

Captain Zubair narrates ‘it was past midnight when I got the message, I informed Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Hamid who was on a tenure at Miranshah, I also passed the order to the ground crew to arm the Cobra with rockets and one Tow, similarly the other Cobra was also armed. By the time we reached the airfield the ground crew were still busy in arming the Cobras. we took off at 0200 hours. We were on NVG, it was a moonless night and we flew westward. Flying time was not more than fifteen minutes. From a distant the flashes of fire were visible through NVG, contact was made with the post commander. We fired rockets towards the attacking militants. It was still very difficult to make out between friend and foe but it did the job. We turned left and other Cobra also strafed at the outer edge. In the next approach, I saw one vehicle on the tracked after confirming that it is not ours, one TOW was fired and it did hit the vehicle. Bell was circling overhead Datta Khel’. The two Cobras remained in air overhead the post, with one coming back to Miranshah for refueling and while it was in position the other did the same. Aim was to keep the morale of the posts high. In the morning at first light Bell which had also refueled, landed amidst Cobra cover to pick up the casualties and landed safely back at Miranshah.

On 5th April 2006, combat aviation flight at Miran Shah was tasked to search and engage miscreant in the general area Shatghalai Narai post where three soldier were martyred after attack by the miscreant. Major Kashif as captain of cobra helicopter took off at first light. They were later diverted towards Mana where an encounter between troops and the fleeing miscreant was in progress. Cobra helicopter spotted miscreant and attacked vigorously with cannon and rockets from the height of 10,500 feet.

On 30<sup>th</sup> July 2007, at 1630 hours the news was received that Banda Post has been ambushed, pilots another than those on duty were relaxing in the room .Captain Imaad Hussain Saddiqui was jogging and when he noticed unusual movement he ran for the airfield and join Major Jahantab as his gunner. They were the first one to take off and reached





*31 Squadron under command Lt Col Tariq with GOC Maj Gen Nasir and Brig Ejaz Cbt Gp*





*33 Squadron under command Lt Col Abid with Maj Gen Arif GOC Avn, Brig Abid Saeed Cbt Gp - 2010 - 2014*





Banda within minutes. They dived and Imaad observed the militants climbing up and few vehicles parked in a scattered manner. They fired rounds of cannon and a TOW in the first engagement which halted the militants advance. In the meantime they were joined by another Cobra which also took on the militants. meanwhile Jahantab –Imaad refuelled the Cobra and were back on site. The militants were now fleeing from the scene, but Imaad fired more TOWs which destroyed the leading and centre vehicle thus compelling the miscreants to fled in all direction and were mowed down by the cannon fire. Next day post commander of Banda post came to visit pilots specially Captain Imaad Hussain Saddiqui to thank him for saving their day.

### **Pash Ziarat, 12-16<sup>th</sup> September 2007.**

The operation was conducted in the Pash Ziarat area, which is north of Razmak, it is a ridge line which covered the track movement going from Razmak to Manna. During British era three posts were constructed on the ridge line known as Alexandria, Duncan and the Pash Ziarat Post. Unfortunately the post itself was lost to Taliban by the army and frontier corps. Now the mission assigned was the capture of the post itself and destruction of the training centres of Taliban. Cobras supported the heli landings on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> September only and were not called for support later; they fired 1690 rounds of cannon during that support. ‘On 12-13<sup>th</sup> September 2007, Operation Razmak was launched, a pair of Cobras took part in it and fire rounds of cannon’.<sup>2</sup> Captain Sajid with his gunner Captain Abdul Qayyum while providing support to the Mi-17 helicopter evacuating casualties came under fire and their Cobra got hit with eleven bullets.<sup>3</sup> Later on 14-15 October and also on 16-18 November, Razmak and surrounding areas were supported by Cobras, another operation was launched for Mana on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2007, five Cobras participated in it.

Cobras were employed for providing aerial cover to these convoys. There were four cobras stationed at Miranshah and they would operate in pair with one Bell 412 acting as rescue helicopter. Fuel for helicopters was also transported on these RODs. Pilots were rotated after fortnight, a maintenance detachment of 499 EME was also stationed at Miranshah. The usual tactics of the miscreants was to fire few rounds of small arms on any one post and in result the post would fire a heavy volley in return, also miscreants would fire improvised missiles at night from the mountains onto the fort, these were the major nuisance as none could

### **NORTH WAZIRSTAN AGENCY**

North Waziristan borders South Waziristan, FR Bannu, FR Karak, Hangu, Kurram Agency and Afghanistan. Its capital is Miranshah and consists of three sub-divisions and nine Teshils. Its total land area is 4,707 square kilometers. The people of the area have a conservative outlook, socially and religiously. Major tribes include the Utmanzai and the Dawars. There are dozens of militant groups operating in the area. The major ones include GulBahadur Group, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Haqqani Network and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Major operations conducted are operation Badal, Tor Mazdak, Bobar Garh and Zarb e Azb. A total of 6420 hours were flown till February 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Aviation Combat Base War Diary.

<sup>3</sup> Official citation of Captain Sajid Ilyas and Captain Atif Qayyum.

*Cobra Flying overhead Tochi Valley*







*Air Mustangs under command Colonel Asim (left most)*



predict their fall or pattern. On 4<sup>th</sup> August 2009, three ground crew members of Army Aviation Naik radio technician Abrar Ahmed (33 Squadron), Naik Nazim Hussain (35 Squadron) and Havildar DMT Muhammad Asghar (33 Squadron) were martyred when a missile hit a wall and then deflected through the other wall and finally bursted into a room where own ground crew was accommodated.. These missiles also pose a threat to the helicopters which were parked in open, only a mud wall afforded them some protection from the splinters. In 2012 summer, a fabric hangar was constructed.

On 7 November 2011, Captain Muhammad Awais Ali (Co-Pilot and Gunner of Cobra helicopter) alongwith Captain Muhammad Rehan Ali (Pilot in Command of Cobra helicopter) were tasked to provide aerial combat cover to the ground troops during the extrication phase from the demolition site of the miscreants hide out at Shawal Hotel (Miranshah city).. **Summer of 2012** was another hectic and action-packed season. There was an uneasy peace going on in the agency which broke down on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2012, a Baloch regiment was carrying out demolition of a wall near Amin post which unexpectedly turned into a close battle with miscreants. Cobras were called for close support. But the fact remains that the mere presence of the Cobra at Miranshah was the biggest morale booster for the formation and the troops. Cobra when they fly low over the posts were always cheered by the scouts and soldiers. Crew was mixed from all the three squadrons and as such were regularly visited by all senior officers of Army Aviation, Colonel Wajahat Ghumman came and so was the Qasim Base Commander Brigadier Khalil Dar.

**Eid Day 27<sup>th</sup> October 2012.** Cobra pilot, writes in his diary *'It is Eid day and it is sunny and warm, Local had the Eid yesterday which is another strange paradox of our cultural clash...Thus Eid was in Saudi Arabia on 25<sup>th</sup>, locals had it on 26<sup>th</sup> and state is having it on 27<sup>th</sup>.. Yesterday I went to the tennis court and Israr(tennis marker) who is a local Daur surprisingly came to the tennis court, wearing new clothes, he was celebrating Eid, since there was none in the court except the ball pickers thus I had a good chat with him. I inquired about him and other locals celebrating Eid. Israr told me that he and his two other brothers purchased sacrificial animals for 60,000 Rupees which includes one lamb and one cow. The Eid is simple in the city and in the tribal villages, they sacrificed but all cannot do it because of financial limitations, but they in fact reared the sacrificial animal for a year. The main and central Eid prayers are held in the city; since it was Friday yesterday thus I also heard the sermon in Pashtu. There were few shops opened in the city as per Israr; people carry out sacrifice and then distribute the meat and also keep the rest with them, in winter it is possible but in summer it is difficult due to heat and lack of electricity. On my query of women wearing new clothes and how and from where they buy bangles, Israr replied that among Daur the women do go for shopping either in Miranshah or to Bannu but in majority of cases it is the men who buy these items for their wives or daughters'.*

## **Zarb-e-Azb; 2014**

In the spring of 2014, the chances of arriving at peace in the tribal areas took a last breath when the Taliban martyred 23 Frontier Corps soldiers, held in captivity since 2010. The last straw came when Jinnah Airport at Karachi was attacked by Taliban on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2014, in which no less 28 civilians were killed. Thus on 15<sup>th</sup> June an operation was launched in North Waziristan Agency, Operation Zarb-E-Azb to clear the agency from miscreants. Infantry Divisions supported by brigade of Special Service Group (SSG) took part in this operation.





*Field Commander with Cobra Pilots at Miranshah*



Army Aviation committed a squadron of Cobras and a squadron each of Mi-17 and Bell 412. The Forward Operating base (FOB) organised itself into three teams known as Alpha, Bravo and Charlie. Team Alpha was based at Peshawar with two Cobras, one Bell 412 and Mi-17. Team bravo was based at Wana with four Cobras, two Bell 412 and one Puma. Heaviest was the team Charlie at Kohat, having six Cobras, four Bell 412 and three Mi-17. The three aviation teams had different role as each was in support of an infantry formation but overall it was combat support, casualty evacuation, command and liaison and each team was given a be prepared mission to support other teams as and when required. Casualty evacuation in the tribal areas was the most sensitive task and role required from army aviation. The utter brutality of Taliban with the captives had generated an apprehension that anyone who is caught alive by Taliban will be beheaded. The operation itself was in seven phases. In first phase, clearance of MiranShah bazar and surrounding habitat, in second phase, clearance of Drappa Danda Khel followed by clearance of road Boya-Degan (west of Miranshah). In Phase four the focus shifted to south where Jhallar –Bichi axis was to be cleared. In Phase five, area north of Miranshah (Saidgi- Ghulam Khan) and in phase six the adjoining area of Spinwam was to be sanitised. In the last phase clearance of Gariom-Bicchi Axis in the south west was to be cleared. Collectively all the phases were within a fifteen minutes flying radius from Miranshah.

A week after the announcement of the operation was spend in evacuating the local population from the town. These Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) were provided with temporary accommodation at Bannu. Army Aviators remained committed and busy in the process. FAARP were moved forward. On 15<sup>th</sup> June 2014, at first light the flight of Cobras appeared overhead Miranshah and started patrolling the town. The town self gives the appearance of a ghost city. Militants had left the town and as such no retaliatory fire took place, on the other hand the ground clearing troops including Commando battalion was not sure about the safety of the streets and house thus each house had to be cleared. They would call the Cobras for suppressing fire. On 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014, the clearing operation of the town commenced,<sup>4</sup>by 30<sup>th</sup> June, fifteen terrorists were killed inside the and surrounding areas of Miranshah. Overall 376 terrorists were killed, 19 had surrendered and 61 hideouts of militants had been destroyed. Own seventeen soldiers embraced martyrdom.

## **Bajaur, Buner, Swat**

Operations against the militants in the Bajaur started in October 2006, when a formation of Cobras alongwith one Bell 412 took part in the destruction of militant hideout at Chenagai on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2006. Bajaur is the smallest political agency in terms of area and is the largest in terms of population. and also shares a 52 Kilometers borders with Afghanistan. Unlike other tribal agencies, Bajaur was a confederation of khanates, ruled by khans thus khanate of Khar, Nawagai, Pashat, Jandol. It covers an area of 1290 square Kilometers with a population of close to 600000. Khar is the agency headquarters and other major towns are Munda (22 kilometers away), Nawagai (28 Kilometers away) and Pashat is 16 Kilometers away from Khar.

Swat covers an area of 5,337 square Kilometres, valley was a former princely state and is bounded by Chitral and Ghizar Districts in North, Kohistan and Shangla Districts in East, Buner and Malakand Districts in South, Lower and Upper Dir Districts in the West. In 2008, miscreants and militants started challenging the writ of state and thus Operation Rah-e-Raast was launched in April 2009. During this operation 1749 flying hours were generated. Swat was a princely state formed in 1922 and abolished in 1969. Swat is considered as a Switzerland of Pakistan because of its scenic beauty. Present operations in Swat in earnest started from the mid October 2007 and continued intermittently till 2009. Commando

<sup>4</sup> Press Release PR 150/2014 of Inter Services Public Relations dated 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014.





battalion was in position at Kanju fort since 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2007. The Taliban offensive which was launched on 24<sup>th</sup> October targeting the police and para military organization did achieved its aim, by 7<sup>th</sup> November 2007, Taliban were in control of Madyn, Kabal and Khawaza Khela tehsils and towns.. Close battles were fought between the infantry and the Taliban, finally in February 2009, a peace accord was signed between the Taliban and the government. Soon this peace pact was broken by the Taliban when they abducted Soldiers who were under cover, they later killed all of them. on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2007, Cobras were employed for the very first time in Swat, at 1230 hours one Cobra and one Bell 412 were used, again at 1515 hours two Cobras were employed in area south of Pir Kalai. On 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007, militants launched physical attack on the post. From 0810-1610 hours three engagements were carried out by Cobras.. Major Suhail Khan and Major Imaad landed at Kabal on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2007, in Cobra 016; it was the first landing of Cobras in Swat and the start of an intense campaign. Two Cobras piloted by Major Nabeel khan, Major Raza, Major Tanveer Abbasi and Major Razi alongwith one MI-17 and one Bell 412 were placed at Kabal. Matta police station was the first target as it had been taken over by the Taliban. Major Pervaiz an ex aviator and serving with intelligence setup had brought along a police officer who knew the police station. They



*Cobra being Armed*

boarded the Bell and Cobras flew towards the target area.

In the winter of 2007-2008, militants got hold of Najia Top which is adjacent to the Swat airfield and thus disrupted the convoy movement of military, it was neutralized with the employment of two Cobras, one Bell 412; they supported the infantry which was climbing up to clear the top. Militants had established strongholds at the top making use of a causeway. Cobras supported the assault 'we fired initially rockets on the militant hideouts as it is an area weapon, the layout and terrain was such that I had to come in from a slanting direction and the other Cobra made frontal pass. TOW was also fired and from the smoke it created it was obvious that we had hit the ammunition dump of the militants. A classic engagement was carried out by the Major Jawad Hanif and Major Muazzam on Cobra. Commandos were carrying out clearing operation at Kabal on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2008, during the cleanup, a party of commandos was entrenched in a house and were besieged from all corners and adjacent houses. Later the commandos were able to break through the cordon with Cobra providing intimate close support by hovering and firing through the narrow alley.



*Cobra taking off Miranshah*

## **Operation Peo Char, May 2009**

The final solution of unrest in Swat was in carrying military operation, flushing out the Taliban and their supporters, to destroy the training centers and hub of militancy; above all to take a moral ascendancy in the campaign by hitting at the very villages of the so-called leaders of militancy. Commando Battalion alongwith company each from other Commando battalions were employed in the first phase. A series of operations were carried out, to clear the valleys of the menace, Peo Char -2 was launched on 26<sup>th</sup> May, followed by operation to clear Dob Banda Valley on 29<sup>th</sup> May (an exclusive Commando Battalion operation), minor operations to clear adjoining valleys in the first week of July known as Tilligram, Sir Killi and Badr Colony, finally the 'Last Nail Operation' in which other Commando battalions and two companies each from other Commando battalions participated, making it the largest SSG Operation in the history of the group and that of Pakistan Army. A through planning and good leadership resulted in having only five fatal casualties and thirteen injured soldiers in the entire month-long campaign. Peo Char is a valley which is located north of Mangora, west of Matta and NE of Shahdheri. It is a narrow valley, surrounded by high peaks with



## *Cobras flying over Hindukush*











steep gradients. Elevation varies from 4000 – 6500 feet in the valley and from 6500 – Over 10,000 feet along the surrounding peaks. The valley is surrounded in the north by Prangman Sar and Dandai Sar, in the East by Uchrai Sar, in the south by Guzano Sar, Shalkho Sar and in the west by Banmanai Sar. The access to the valley is from the east which is served with metaled rd which offshoots from Mingora-Dir rd. Pilots and ground gathered at Ghazi Airbase almost a week before the commencement of the operation. Pilots were housed at Ghazi and had to travel to the base. A night before the operation a detail briefing was given to all the pilots. Ground crew had a gigantic task to carryout daily inspection of the aircraft. Cobra takes two and half hour of inspection, ammunition was loaded. Lieutenant Colonel Irfan Hassan was commanding 33 Squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Rana Abbas was commanding 31 Squadron and Lieutenant Colonel Wajahat Ghumman was commanding the 35 Squadron. Colonel Asif Jah was the forward operating base commander. Lieutenant Colonel Irfan was leading the formation of three Cobras with him was Captain Junaid, Major Zubair and Major Naqvi were the wingman alongwith Major Mujtaba and Captain Babur. ‘We were maintaining 4500 feet indicated, each Cobra had 300 rounds of cannon, eight rockets and two TOWs with full fuel.

Ghazi to Daggar we flew low, it took us 25 minutes, from here onwards we climb and took another 27 minutes to reach Peochar’ recalls formation leader. This formation was followed by a formation of MI-17. Cobras had to secure the landing zones. Kabal was selected as the FAARP, another FAARP was established at Daggar. first wave flew 2.5 Hours and landed back for refuelling and after half an hour was airborne again. Thus throughout the day constant Cobra cover was ensured over the target. Cobra mostly conducted speculated fire and landed back at Ghazi before sunset.



*Cobras over South Waziristan*

Apart from main operation at Peochar, the miscreants hideout at adjoining areas was also under punishment. The Taliban sympathisers were trying to gather support and to harass

own troops. Reportedly they were gathering on axis Sultanwas-Kalpani, intelligence reports highlighted around 300 anti state elements armed with shoulder fire anti tank weapon. Major Khalid had just landed and Cobra was being hot armed when an intelligence officer appeared at the helipad and told Major Maoz regarding the target area. Major Maoz had some reservation and they were resolved through the satellite phone call with his seniors. ‘ As we took, Kalpani is about seven minutes flying time, the target indicated to me on ground was a mosque, when I reached overhead the Kalpani, I saw a building with mosque, what was perplexing was the number of shoes outside the building, it was not prayer times, . Day was not yet over for him, as the militants at Kalpani whom he had taken on earlier were now gathering in much more strength at same spot. Major Maoz again took off and merely half an hour before last light with full payload and again reached the same spot and through brilliant airmanship and tactical flair ensured maximum damage to the militants. Army was finally able to bring peace into the troubled valley, slowly and gradually the militants were forced to surrender or face elimination. Local population which by nature is peace loving and have more liberal views as compare to tribal agencies , rejoiced with relief . Cobra pilots narrate how the people would rush to their roofs to wave at the pilots waving hands and dupattas . In one particular instance Major Imaad and Major Jawad Hanif were so move with one particular house that they visited it with sweets and thanked the family for their support. Ground and maintenance crew deserves as much appreciation as possible. Ammunition and fuel at FAARP was



***Cobras landing at Khar (Bajaur)***

transported through the MI-17 helicopters, every entry in the helicopters was rectified by these technicians working under adverse environment, throughout the night. Cobras flew 2310.8 Hours. In three days 1600 troops were helilifted. A series of operations took place in Bajaur from August 2008 and lasted till December 2008 known as Operations Sherdil 1-5<sup>5</sup> these operations lasted from August –December 2008. Aim was to open the main road from Torghandi to Nawagai. The operations started in Bajaur when miscreants and militants siege the FC post at Loi Sum. The post itself is important as it is on a track junction and therefore checks movement across the border into Kunar province of Afghanistan. Cobras were inducted at this stage of the battle to clear the areas of miscreants. Cobras had a difficult task , first and foremost was the identification of the foe. The six feet high maize crop













was a major hiding place and as such burst of cannon were fired into the crops. Taliban movement in the rear were also hit with rockets and five TOWs were fired on the suspected militant hideouts. By 27<sup>th</sup> September 2008, a link was established with Loe Sum.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2008, the operation was launched with an aim to relieve the Lakaro post, which was already being provisioned with helicopters. Cobras were providing the combat escort to the cargo helicopters in this operations. Colonel Nauman Saeed Commandant Bajaur Scouts, himself led from the front, so was Major General Tariq Khan IGFC, who refused to take his flag down from his jeep in the operational area, as advised by many. Bajaur was one of the most hard fought battles of the Al Mizan. Militants were eager to keep their foothold firm and army and militia determined to get rid of this menace once and for all. Cobras played a decisive role in the winning of the battle, they flew low and high depending upon the situation. They would land at first light at Khar, get the briefing from the commandant and then carry out all day long close support sorties. ‘operations against the miscreants were at its peak in Bajaur agency during September and October 2008... in recognition of profound display of courage on part of all Mustangs, Commandant Bajaur gave us the title of Terror of the Skies’.



## Kurram Valley

### *Cobra at Khar Fort*

Kurram valley is an old civilisation, mentioned in Rig Veda as Kurmu, it is known after the principal river of the same name which runs for almost 70 miles bisecting the valley in a north-south direction. Kurram Valley is the area between the Thall in the south to the semi-circular mountain range of Safeed Koh in the north, in which Sikaram is the highest peak (15620 feet). It ascends or descends in a gradual manner with Parachinar the headquarters of the agency in far north having an elevation of 5750 feet and Thall at 2150 feet. In December 2009, the sectarian conflict had resulted in the closure of the main artery of the valley from Kohat onwards. Miscreants now started to settle down in the central Kurram, after military operations in Swat and other parts of the province. On 17 November 2011, Major Ali Raj was given the mission to engage heavy resistance given by the miscreants to the Light Commando Battalion troops in the confined valley with adjoining heights of 8800 feet. While Operating beyond technical limitations of the helicopter, Major Ali Raj devised own tactics and attacked the hostile locations very effectively, which saved the lives of own troops and paved the way for move forward by ground troops.



Koh-i-Safeed III was launched on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2013 in the Arghajo pocket. Militants had strong bunkers on Tambusar Feature. One major attack was launched by them on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2012 at Green Ridge. Cobras engaged militant suspected hideouts from 1415 -1445 hours, firing TOWs and resultantly three bunkers were destroyed. Another formation of Cobras supported the troops of Commando and FF Regiment at 1500 hours. At Jarobi, on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2013, pair of Air Wolves along with Bell 412 participated. Total flying time of Cobras was 12.8 hours, Both Cobras and Bell 412 got hit by 12.7mm bullets fired by militants. Major Shamayl Raja was awarded with a COAS Commendation Card for his dedication and professionalism. On 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> April 2013, Air Wolves again supported ground troops at Kalaya.

Koh-i-Safeed IV was thus aimed at retaking of the Muhammadi Feature. Operation started rolling at mid night on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2013, with heavy artillery bombardment. The advancing infantry and commando battalion had to face accurate sniper fire from the militants. Seven Cobras along with three Bell 412 were formed into three combat teams led by Lieutenant Colonel Nadeem Yousaf . Cobra teams attacked one after the other at the suspected hideouts of the militants, guided by ground troops. It was almost a replica of Peochar operation, only this time the resistance was stiff. One team remained in air whereas the other would refuel at Thall. Due to high altitude, the fuel was kept bare minimum in order to have more firepower. The situation was as such that there was no clear cut delimitation among the friend and foe. Ziarat Sar/ Qismat Sangar engagements were one of the major and main engagements in Koh-i-Safeed. Five Cobras and two Bell 412 participated in this operation, generating 35.9 hours of flying. This operation facilitated the ground troops to capture both the heights with relatively less effort. It was the elevation which was a serious limitation for the Cobras; no Cobra had ever fired at such height. Attack commenced at 0200 hours on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2013. Own troops did not face any stiff resistance at the base but as they climbed up, the occasional accurate sniping from militant would halt the progress, presence of improvised explosive device (IED) was another constant fear and threat. However constant air cover allowed own troops to inch forward. On 8<sup>th</sup> June 2013 Air Wolves had an engagement at Maidan in Tirah. Militants were on the run and now found sanctuary in Tirah plateau. There is a pass at Kalaya which allows this



*Cobra being refuelled at Malakand*





movement, it is an ancient route. In this operation five Cobras along with two Bell 412 took part. These engagements generated a total of 16.3 hours of AH-1Fs.

### **Khyber and Mohmand 2012 - 2018**

The Khyber Pass and Afridis have become synonym to each other, Afridi is also an Aryan tribe, and it has eight clans (Kuki Khel, Malik Din Khel, Qambar Khel, Kamar Khel, Zakha Khel, Aka Khel, Sepah and Adam Khel). Each clan has its own territory, Kuki Khel controls the eastern mouth of Khyber Pass and then road passes through Zakha Khel territory. Qambar Khel has Bara under their control, Adam Khel controls Darra Adam Khel, and Malik Din occupies Maidan. The other tribes of Khyber are Shinwari, Mullagori and Shilman but they are on the northern side and even among them only Shinwari are in great strength. There are two Militia Corps, namely Khyber Rifles and Mahsud Scouts deployed in the Khyber Agency. A political agent have three assistant political agents (Bara, Jamrud, Landai Kotal), each APA have two –three political tehsildars and naib tehsildars under him (Bara, Tirah, Jamrud, Mullagori, Landai Kotal, Bazar, Torkham). In January 2008 when FC had started operations in the Bara Valley, Cobras supported the actions of Mahsud Scouts; aim of the operations was to counter the militancy which was still in infancy, to ensure the safety of the land routes between Khyber and Peshawar, also between the Kohat- Peshawar monitoring the movement in the Bara Valley. In January 2008 at 1235 hours, Cobra piloted by Major Imran Akhtar and Major Hammad Dabir, were coming back to Peshawar after an engagement in Kurram, near Thal , they decided to fly low and during low flying they entangle wires and the Cobra crash landed in the mid of the River Kurram. ‘Both pilots miraculously remained scratch less’. The subsequent recovery of Cobra and making it fit for flying again is a tribute to the 499 EME Battalion. Operation was launched in Bara Bazar, Aka Khel, Gandao and Hasan Khel (FR Peshawar) areas of Khyber Agency. Operation itself was supported by a flight of Cobras.



***Colonel (Brig) Wajahat Ghumman TbT Bar, 2nd from right***



***COAS General Ashfaq Pervaiz Kayani, NI(M)***

***meeting with Army Aviators (Brigadier Anjum, Commander 404 Group) at Tarbela after successful operations in Swat. Maj Gen Tanveerullah GOC Avn is also present***











*Cobra in Khyber Valley*





An air operation by Army Aviation was conducted on 10 February 2010 in Tirah valley, Khyber Agency against a high value target. A formation of one Bell - 412 and two cobra helicopters was engaging the target effectively. Major Mudassar Razzaq Bajwa was flying a cobra helicopter. During this engagement, he maneuvered his helicopter in an extremely professional manner, unleashing his ammunition on the miscreant. He destroyed four fleeing vehicles and killed a number of miscreants. As he adjusted his helicopter aiming at a bunker, his helicopter was suspectedly hit by a rocket fired from a nearby ridge. The rocket damaged the engine and tail boom of the helicopter it caught fire in midair and became uncontrollable. He tried his best to control the helicopter but in vain. The helicopter fell to the ground and was engulfed in flames in matter of seconds. Major Mudassar Razzaq and his gunner Captain Asim Karim, embraced shahadat on the spot.

### **Radd-UI-Fasaad & Faseel-E- Ahan,**

Both operations are interlink, having a common aim and mission to eliminate the last strongholds of militants. Raad –UI-Fasaad is based upon intelligence information and requires surgical strikes in the heart of terror. Faseel –E-Ahan operation was launched in 2017, to fence the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan thus denying the militants to enter Pakistan and tribal areas without proper checking.



***Lt Col Imaad, first pilot to fire over 100 TOW missiles***

Militants retaliated by conducting acts of terror. Intelligence based operation were conducted against terrorists in which the Cobra was the key to the suppression and elimination of militancy. Cobras by virtue of their ability and capability to strike at the militants irrespective of terrain and distance proves a decisive factor. In March 2017, during one such operation, conducted in Malikabad (Swabi District) the ground forces had encircled the militant's compound but were facing stiff resistance thus Cobras were called in direct support. Such situation demands extra precision on part of the Cobra crew, they have to avoid fratricide. Pair of Cobras attacked the compound from multiple directions, the attack pattern requires Cobras to dive from height, firing and pulling up for successive engagement. The wingman follows the leader and keep an eye not only on the target but also on the surrounding area. One Cobra was hit with a bullet while pulling up , still the formation continued the engagement and ensured that ground operation met its objectives. Major Usman Nagra, Major Umair Rehman and Major Malik Ameer Hamza Awan were mentioned in dispatches for their professional handling.



***Cobra being Sling by MI-17***





*Cobra being Helislinged from operational area*





## Sapera Sar – April 2018

Bajaur after the successful elimination of terrorists still had few gaps along the international border which are porous in nature and thus facilitate the movement of miscreants. It was decided in principle during February 2018 to close these gaps, most vital being a stretch of 9.5 Kilometers; a peak by the name Sapera if under own control could effectively



check these movements. Thus between in March 2018, an operation was launched in Bajaur in which Army Aviation played a key role, five Cobras, two Bell 412, two Mi-17 and one Fennec took part. ‘This operation was expected to ameliorate security situation in Bajaur Agency and to deny exploitation of same area to terrorist’s action in Dir and larger Malakand Agency’. In April 2018 sortie of two Cobras alongwith one Bell 412 took off and was overhead own troops within five minutes. Two Combat Flights provided aerial cover to own troops till last light, during which three engagements and four cover missions were given. This was the only day in which Cobras fired. In the first Vick, Lieutenant Colonel Imaad and Major Basalat alongwith Major Yasir and Major Waqar and Major Taimoor and Colonel Munir (Bell 205) were in air. 270 rounds of cannon were fired at Shaheedano. Ground troops had been fired upon thus suppressing fire was carried out. In the next sortie, commanding officer again led with Major Basalat as his gunner followed by Major Aftab and Major Fakhar with Major Zia and Major Sibtain in Bell.

*Cobra in an attack mode*



*Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, NI(M),  
congratulating Colonel Munir forward operating base (FOB) commander*















*Air Wolves under command Lt Col Irfan with Col (R) Saleem Khan*





*Colonel Nadeem Yousaf Commanding Officer-2014*





*31 Squadron under command Lt Col Muneer 2014 - 2018*









*31 Squadron with Maj Gen (R) Taqi Rizvi 2014 - 2018*





*35 Squadron with Brig Wajahat Ghumman 2013 - 2015*





*Air Mustangs 2016*





*Combat Group*

*Brig Ejaz handing over command to Brig Wajahat 23rd July 2014*



*Cobra waiting for prey*





*Cobra during 'road operating day'*







# Training

## Combat Conversion Wing (CCW)

Combat Conversion Wing was raised at Army Aviation School in May 2005 with an aim to have a dedicated Cobra training for the pilots. The pattern of the operations and their intensity was the fundamental reason for this. Before this raising, the pilots were being inducted in Cobra through the standard pattern. A young pilot with a service of 3-5 years after earning his brevet was posted in composite squadron where after two or more years of flying he was selected for rotary conversion. The rotary conversion itself was not streamlined, it depended upon the availability of helicopters; at times, it was carried on Alouette at others on Jet Ranger. The Bell OH-13S which acted as basic trainer was replaced with Schweizer helicopter. From the mid of nineties, Special Elementary courses were organized with a view to



fill the requirement of pilots on twin engine helicopters; they lasted till early part of 2001 and were replaced with Rotary Courses. Pilots training on Cobra required special attention and skills, first it is the only tandem seat helicopter in Pakistan Army Aviation, also the nature of flying requires more dedication and concentration, both from student and his instructor.

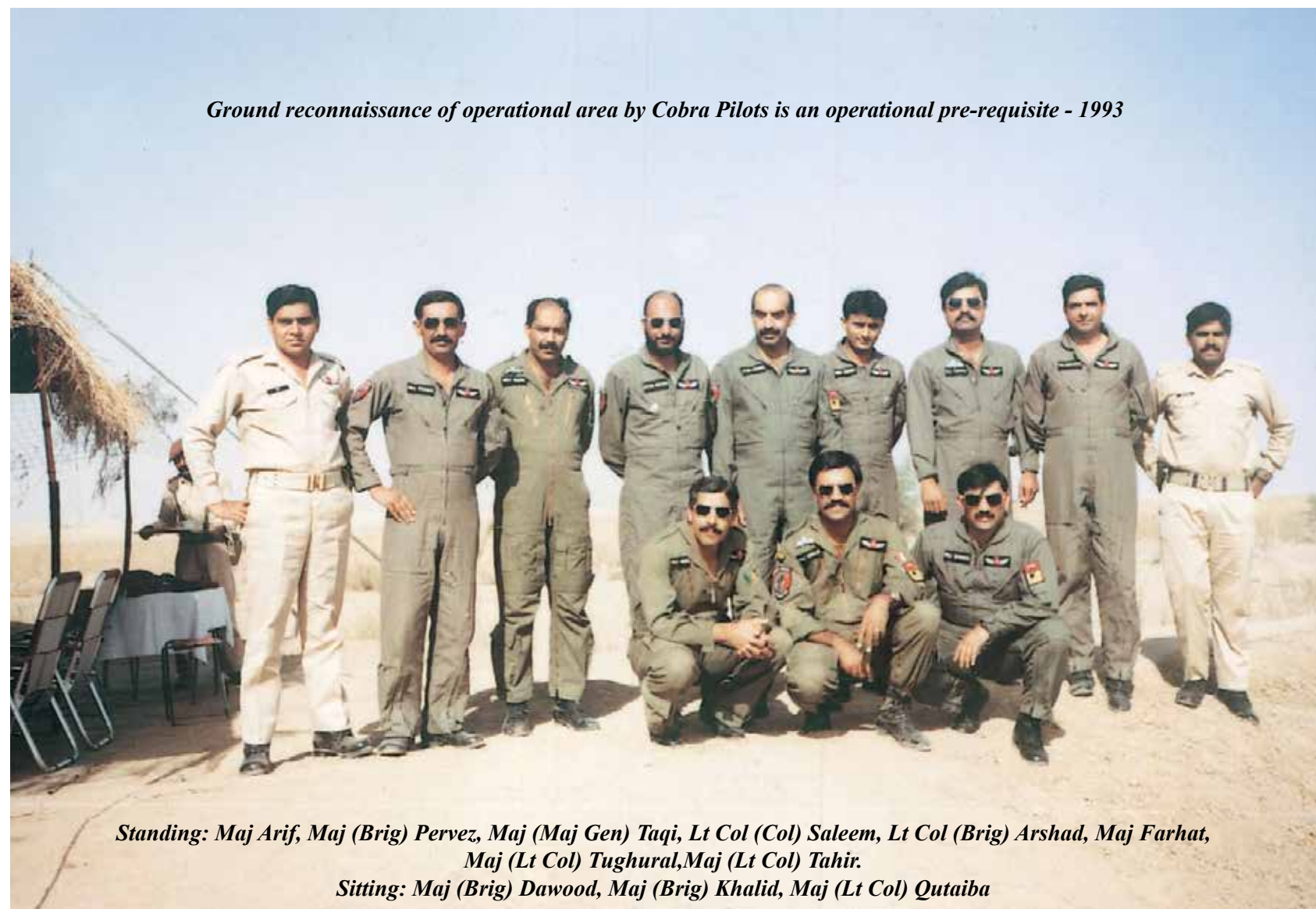


In July 2007, CCW was shifted to Multan but there was no dedicated building and in 2009 the present building was occupied. This building at one time was occupied by 4 Squadron.

CCW from the beginning had a basic mandate to train Combat pilots in a manner that refines their combat skills thus enhancing the combat efficiency; thus its standards are high. It organizes combat conversion courses which include Aero Scout(AQC) and Cobra Qualification Course(CQC), it also trains pilots as Maintenance Test Pilot (MTP). In the advance phase, CCW runs courses for training already qualified pilots as instructor pilots for Cobra and scouts helicopters. Taking standardization checks, examination and flying checkouts not only that of Combat Group but also of Civil Armed Forces pilots. is also part of its mandate.

In a given year it conducts 6-8 flying courses and equal number of cadres. In 2015, it flew 1700 accident free hours and graduated

69 aviators. In 2016, 1300 accident free flying hours were flown and 58 aviators were graduated as attack, aero scout pilots and instructor pilots. Cadres include Advance Combat Maneuver, a cadre of four weeks duration in which ten hours are flown, it has an intake of 8-12 student pilots who all have sufficient experience as gunners on Cobra. Internal Security Operations Cadre is another hallmark of CCW which aims at inculcating techniques to fly and fight in the anti-terror role. In IS Cadre, road operating drills including modalities and actions are taught, escort mission, combat support missions, armed reconnaissance missions and fire raid missions when ground troops are not in near vicinity and last but not the least the casualty





## *Cobra Qualification Course (CQC) - 1998*



*Brig Tipu  
Combat Commander*

*GOC Avn Maj Gen Razzaq*

*Brig Qayyum Mahsud Base Commander*



evacuation missions are part of training. Cadres have less duration (four weeks) whereas AQC and CQC both have ten weeks duration. During the flying training, a student pilot undergoes night flying, NVG flying, battle drills, instrument flying, operational area familiarization, Joint Air Attack Team(JAAT) and basic flying exercises. Efforts and assistance of Major General Samreez Salik Vice Chief of General Staff (VCGS), Major General Khalil Dar, General Officer Commanding Army Aviation and Brigadier Wajahat Ghumman is worth recording.

### Rotary Training at USA-2010

In 2010, Pakistan Army Aviation selected sixteen officers to undergo basic rotary training in USA known as Initial Entry Rotary Course (IERC), these officers proceeded in three batches. In the first batch were three officers and within a fortnight another batch of five officers joined them at Fort Rucker. The selected officers were all fixed wing pilot with no rotary flying experience, few of them had

instructor rating on fixed wing single engine. Major Harris Hussain was one such officer, he is presently performing as GSO-II in Headquarters Combat Group. He narrates, ‘we flew to Washington Dulles airport, from there we took a connecting flight to Atlanta and then another flight which took us to Doughton a small airfield close to Fort Rucker. American Army



*Allied officers visiting Combat Group.*



*General Raheel Sharif, Chief of the Army Staff flew in a Cobra on 26 February 2016 during an exercise*





***Lt Col Mohsin (33 Squadron) Brig Wajahat (Combat Commander),  
COAS and Lt Col Salman (31 Squadron)***







Centre of Flying excellence is located in Fort Rucker, we were housed in a single occupancy suite. The pattern was that every fifteen day a course was being conducted thus our course serial was 10/18, thus the eighteenth course of year 2018. Three officers had reported earlier and were part of serial 17, later in flying phase we were united. In the first phase, after preliminary area orientation, form filling and medical examination, we had to undergo four weeks ground studies. The day would start very early and last till evening with an hour break for lunch. In the academic phase, instructors were all well prepared and had all the teaching aids. Every alternate day we had quiz tests and after the ground schooling our flying phase started. Flying phase was in fact teaching and making us as Aero Scouts. In the first phase, the day would start very early, as the bus for school would depart at 0445 hours, an hour of preflight and an hour of meteorological briefing. During Met/ ATC, emergencies were asked and any one failing was punished to spend an hour or two in the library after pack up. In the library, you cannot sleep as the librarian an old man would simply deduct the time one has slept and later it will be carried forward. At times, the whole class had to spend hours in library as punishment on weekend.' Major Awais highlights that, 'an orange dot was also placed on our wrist watch, aim was to be aware of the fact that life is more important than rushing things we were given a small bag as well to pick up any foreign flying object (FOD), placed it at the given place, in return the same bag was returned to the individual with small souvenir inside'. The grading was strict, A grade was between 90-100%, B ranged from 80% and above and C grade was for marks above 70%; there were no grades below 70%.. The flying phase comprised of three distinct stages, in the first stage, students had to fly 40 hours on Visual Flying Model of Jet Ranger, in next phase instrument flying of thirty odd hours and finally forty hours of night flying including night vision goggles (NVG) landings and tactical flying. There was no solo flying, grade slips were in terms of A, B or C grades and were given daily. Every morning the instructor would take two students each and proceed to staging fields, approximately eight-ten nautical miles of main air field (Fort Rucker). At staging field, he would drop one student and carryout flying with other and then changeover. Flying lessons were the same as in Pakistan, effects of control and so on, one major difference was the practices given in auto rotations; every student carried almost 200 such manoeuvres in his course. There was no concept of power recovery, student had to land with power off. There was twenty days break for Christmas and New Year, students were allowed to bring their families too. Mission preparation and map marking was very elaborate and would consume almost two-three hours. At the end, a graduation ceremony was held, Major Harris was given an honorary diploma in flying for securing highest grades in flying, in fact his grades were the highest since 2007 secured by any student including Americans. Another Pakistani pilot Major Awais was awarded honorary diploma for securing highest marks in academics. Overall, all Pakistani students secured good grades. Another course in America which Cobra pilots attended was Aviation Captain training course, similar to our mid-career course, it was a yearlong course in which tactical aspects of aviation such as planning, and handling of aviation assets were taught.



*Cobra Pilots undergoing training in USA*





*Maj Adnan, Maj (Lt Col) Tariq, Lt Col (Brig) Ghumman, Maj Gen Kingravi, Maj (Lt Col) Nabeel, Maj (Lt Col) Sohail, Maj (Lt Col) Kashif, Capt (Lt Col) Imaad  
at Tarbela*





# THE CRADLE OF



## BEST COMBAT PILOTS IN THE WORLD

### AQC-1

Maj Tariq Saleem Khan  
Maj Syed Tasslimoon Tauqir  
Maj Muhammad Naeem  
Maj Mirza Muhammad Aslam  
Maj Arshad Saeed  
Maj Khalid Mahmood  
Maj Syed Naeem Raza Jaffri  
Maj Khawaja Aziz Ul Rehman

### AQC-2

Maj Imtiaz Ahmed Anjum  
Maj Muzammil Tajammal  
Maj Muzaffar Ghani  
Maj Muhammad Tahir Akram  
Maj Ashar Aziz Kayani  
Maj Tariq Mahmood  
Maj Shahid Abbas

### AQC-3

Maj Mahmood Hussain  
Maj Anwar Ahmed Khan  
Maj Syed Farhat Ali

### AQC-7

Capt Qazi Zahoor  
Capt Faisal Islam

### AQC-10

Capt Rana Ghulam Abbas  
Capt Farrukh Ejaz Tehseen  
Capt Muhammad Zaher  
Capt Syed Muhammad Ali  
Capt Rashid Kharit  
Capt Mazhar Ul Haq  
Capt Omer Mahdi Warraich  
Capt Hamid Ali  
Capt Nadeem Yousaf

### AQC-16

Maj Arif Shafique  
Capt Abdul Majid  
Capt Kashif Fayyaz Bhatti  
Capt Muhammad Mohsin Makhdoom  
Capt Muhammad Imran Akhtar  
Capt Muhammad Jawad Hanif  
Capt Sajid Ilyas

### AQC-20

Maj Kamran Zia  
Capt Shamayal Raza  
Capt Rashid Jaffer  
Capt Raja Khayam Ishaq  
Capt Munawar Ali Malik  
Capt Muhammad Farhan Saleem  
Capt Kashif Raza

### AQC-26

Maj Nauman Haider Toor  
Maj Tariq Hameed  
Maj Usman Ahmed Khan, agn  
Maj Muhammad Zohaib Qais  
Capt Aatif Javed  
Capt Umair Ur Rehman  
Capt Wikkhar Ahmed  
Capt Yasir Habib Akhtar  
Capt Syed Ali Qasim  
Capt Muhammad Ijaz Sarwar Khan  
Capt Yasir Mustafa  
Capt Malik Ameer Hamza

### AQC-27

Maj M. hamid Hamid  
Maj Minhaj Haider  
Maj Muhammad Amer Saeed  
Maj Yasir Mumtaz  
Maj Muhammad Rehan Zafar  
Capt Zafar Iqbal  
Capt Khalid Ahmed Bangath  
Capt Hassan Masud  
Capt Muhammad R. him  
Capt Muhammad Shahzad  
Capt Neuman Khan

### AQC-28

18 Jul 16 - 23 Sep 16  
Maj Junaid Ahmed Khan  
Maj Rnan Muhammad Abbas  
Maj Salfar Abbas Saqib  
Capt Kashif Mahmood  
Capt Fakhar Mehmood  
Capt Mushtaq Ahmed  
Capt Ghulam Murtaza Joyia

### AQC-29

06 Feb 17 - 14 Apr 17  
Maj Basalat Ahmed Farooqi  
Maj Solien Ahmed  
Maj Muhammad Basit Ali  
Maj Tanveer Ahmed  
Maj Muhammad Amir Zaigham  
Capt Bilal Suhail

### AQC-30

10 Jul 17 - 15 Sep 17  
Maj Qasim Raja  
Maj Aatif Mazhar Bhatti  
Capt Muhammad Farhan Khan  
Maj Abid Shaheen Rao  
Maj Shahreyar Khan  
Capt Sharjeel Imtiaz



### AQC-4

Maj Tahir Hameed  
Maj Mahmood Ahmed

### AQC-8

Maj Muhammad Raza Farooq  
Maj Muhammad Tehseen Khan  
Capt Shahid Latif Ch  
Capt Imran Rafique  
Capt Rizwan Ahmed Saleem

### AQC-12

Maj Nadeem Ahmed Kayani  
Maj Milan Amjad Mahmood  
Maj Muhammad Tariq  
Maj Syed Amer Abbas  
Maj Muhammad Shahid Butt  
Maj Abig Aziz  
Maj Muhammad Mubashir Mahmood  
Capt Kashif Naseer Bhatti  
Capt Khawar Rashid

### AQC-17

Maj Sohail Khan  
Capt Naveed Zafar Abbasi  
Capt Kamran Ahmed  
Capt Khalid Rashid Maooz

### AQC-24

Maj Nasir Ahmed Khan  
Maj Abdullah  
Maj Muhammad Asad Hameed Bhatti  
Maj Altamash Riaz  
Capt Syed Omer Waqas  
Capt Fazal Muqeem  
Capt Muhammad Sami Ullah  
Maj Muhammad Awais

### AQC-6

Maj Javid Rafiq  
Maj Muhammad Nasheed Iqbal  
Maj Amar Raza  
Capt Abdul Hameed

### AQC-9

Capt Rizwan Mahmood  
Capt Zahid Anwar  
Capt Muhammad Azam Khan  
Capt Rehan Waheed  
Capt Asim Razzaque

### AQC-14

Capt Syed Hammad Dabir  
Capt Ahmed Farooq  
Capt Faisal Kamal  
Capt Muhammad Usman Malik  
Capt Muhammad Yousaf Anjum  
Capt Syed Ali

### AQC-15

Maj Wikkhar Ahmed  
Capt Naveed Shakoor  
Capt Asghar Mahmood  
Capt Waseem Mahmood  
Capt Khurram Rasool

### AQC-18

Maj Muhammad Saeed  
Maj Sajid Raza  
Capt Muhammad Omer Talal  
Capt Mudassar Razzaq

### AQC-25

Maj Muhammad Asim Javed  
Capt Kamran Riaz  
Maj Umair Latif  
Maj Salman Omer  
Capt Muhammad Asif Javed  
Capt Waqar Ahmed



# OUR PRIDE

## SITARA-I-BASALAT

Maj Mudassar Razzaq Bajwa

## TAMGHA-I-BASALAT

Lt Col Abid Saeed  
Lt Col Raza Farooq  
Lt Col Irfan Hassan  
Maj Sajid Ilyas  
Maj Naeem Ullah Khattak  
Maj Muhammad Nabeel Khan  
Lt Col Muhammad Tahseen  
Col Muhammad Wajahat Ali Ghuman  
Maj Khalid Rashid Maooz  
Capt Asim Karim Khan

## IMTIAZI SANAD

Maj Naeem Amir Azeem  
Brig Anjum Irshad Khan  
Maj Ahmed Muftaba Azhar  
Maj Imran Ahmed Farid  
Capt Asim Karim Khan  
Maj Iftikhar Ahmed  
Maj Mhammad Farooq  
Capt Muhammad Asad  
Maj Asghar Mahmood  
Maj Sajid Hussain Meher  
Maj Amir Azam  
Maj Mazhar Ali  
Maj Nadeem Khan  
Capt Muhammad Amrose Haroon  
Capt Shehryar  
Maj Muhammad Zubair  
Maj Omer Talal  
Maj Ahmed Junaid  
Maj Umer Mushtaq  
Maj Arfaan Tahir Qureshi  
Maj Imran Yasin  
Maj Kshif Raza  
Maj Hamid Riaz  
Maj Bilal Sultan  
Maj Kashif Anwar  
Capt Immad Siddiqui  
Maj Fahad Mustafa  
Maj Muhammad Imran Akhtar  
Maj Muhammad Ali Raj  
Capt Muhammad Fayyaz Khan  
Lt Col Muhammad Imran Afzal  
Maj Raja Mustafa Abbas  
Maj Rashid Jaffar

## COAS COMMENDATION CARD

Lt Col Nasheed Iqbal  
Maj Sajid Ilyas  
Lt Col Abid Aziz  
Maj Abbas Hussain Awan  
Maj Babar Younis  
Maj Adnan Habib  
Maj Khurram Rasool  
Maj Shamayl Raza  
Capt Kamran Riaz  
Lt Col Asim Razzaq  
Maj Sajid Raza  
Maj Sohail Khan  
Lt Haseeb Ullah  
Maj Khalid Rashid Maooz  
Maj Sanaullah Khan  
Capt Furqan Khalil  
Capt Rehan Ali  
Maj Muhammad Awais  
Maj Jauhar Ayub  
Lt Col Nadeem Yousaf  
Maj Umar Mushtaq  
Maj Naqi Abbas  
Maj Umair Latif  
Maj Salman Omer  
Lt Col Raja Muhammad Munir  
Maj Javad Hanif  
Maj Muhammad Awais  
Capt Khurram Shaharyar  
Maj Tanvir Ahmed  
Maj Muhammad Aftab Qamar  
Maj Tanvir Ahmed  
Maj Muhammad Aftab Qamar  
Maj Moazam Javed  
Maj Salman Munir Malik







## Cobra Observation Post

The Cobra Observation Post popularly known as Cobra OP is an integral part of every Cobra pilot's career, its memories often haunt him even after retirement. Present day Army Aviation takes its roots from artillery, it was in England where after the end of First World War a fierce debate and paper battle ensued between Royal Air Force and army over the control of the aircraft. In 1936, RAF did raise some squadrons exclusively for the observation and correction of artillery fire. In Pakistan, till 1958-9, only gunner officers were inducted in the army flying squadrons. Gunners do practice their correction skills at the ranges and the place from this exercise and training is conducted is known as OP. In Army Aviation School, conduct of artillery fire from the ranges is an integral



*Cobra observation post*

aspect of the flying course. Every squadron also carryout this training, within the squadron on Miniature range and also on live ranges.

Cobra after induction, had to carryout annual firing practice, each Cobra helicopter have two pilots, one who sits in front seat is the gunner and captain occupies the rear seat. Selection of a firing range for Cobra helicopters naturally thus requires an area much larger, as Cobras' have to fly, and at times fires weapons from their maximum range.



*Lieutenant General Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmad, Corps Commander Multan  
inaugurating the newly constructed Cobra OP Complex - 2016*



# *Cobra OP*





# Cobra OP







*Cobra*





| AERIAL FIELD FIRING 1st HALF - 2018 |               |                |     |     |        |                 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-----|-----|--------|-----------------|
| TASK TABLE                          |               |                |     |     |        |                 |
| AC                                  | PILOT         | GUNNER/COPILOT | TOW | RKT | CANNON | REMARKS         |
| <b>ENGAGEMENT-1</b>                 |               |                |     |     |        |                 |
| 003                                 | LT COL UMAR D | MAJ BIRGAN     | -   | 07  | 50     | ID              |
| 004                                 | LT COL MOHAM  | MAJ SOFIAN     | -   | 09  | 100    | IP (Held) CO: B |
| 011                                 | LT COL TARG   | MAJ VARCON     | -   | 06  | -      | Exp Capt        |
| 043                                 | MAJ HADSEN    | MAJ SHAYD      | -   | 07  | -      | P Capt          |
| 004                                 | MAJ UMAR      | MAJ IMRAN      | -   | 09  | 100    | N. Capt/No. 10  |
| 003                                 | MAJ BIRGAN    | MAJ BIRGAN     | -   | 06  | 50     | N. Capt         |
| <b>ENGAGEMENT-2</b>                 |               |                |     |     |        |                 |
| 043                                 | MAJ WAGAR     | MAJ SHAYD      | -   | 07  | -      | Exp Capt        |
| 004                                 | MAJ TAYYER    | MAJ YASHEEL    | -   | 09  | -      | N. Capt         |
| 011                                 | MAJ TAYYER    | MAJ UMAR       | -   | 06  | 50     | N. Capt         |
| 003                                 | MAJ SHERAY    | MAJ AZHAR      | -   | 07  | -      | Exp Capt        |
| 004                                 | MAJ ALI       | MAJ UMAR       | -   | 08  | -      | N. Capt         |





*Cobra firing a Tube launched Optically tracked wire guided Weapon (TOW)*







*General Officer Commanding Army Aviation, Maj Gen Nasir Dilawar with Cobra Pilots and ground crew at Cobra OP-2018*











## *Cobra Spewing Venom*







## Cobra in Sports

Sports are an integral aspect of military life, in Combat Group due to organizational structure, sports assume an even more importance. The strength of officers within a combat squadron are over thirty and soldiers are under two hundred thus sports tend to be more officers oriented. Another aspect is the inherent apprehension of commanders and officers themselves regarding any injury in relation to sports, as it will invariably affects the mission capability. On the other hand sports and games provides a mental relief, improves muscular coordination and above all keeps ones happy, fit and contented. From its raising in 1984 till 2002 when it gained an independent identity, Combat Group mostly participated in sports as part of Multan Base, later it fields its own team.

Golf was and still is the favourite sports of the Cobra pilots. Major Ahsan Janjua (Lieutenant Colonel retired, commanded 33 Squadron) was the very first celebrity of Cobras, he on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1987, won the First Gross at Multan Golf Club and received the prize from President General Zia Ul Haq.<sup>1</sup> In 1992, Lieutenant Colonel Mansoor Saeed (AA&QMG) and Major Nasir Mian (GSO-II) representing Multan Golf Club won the Shafq Golf Trophy at Okara (21-22 April 1992). The pair also bagged the first Gross and first Net respectively. Later Lieutenant Colonel Mansoor won the Army Golf Championship held at Lahore in 1993, whereas Major Nasir Mian was third Gross in all Pakistan Amateur Golf Championship which was held at Multan. Later in the years, Combat Group had some real avid and addicted golfers including Major General Muhammad Tahir and Brigadier Khalid Mahmood.

Basketball has been the most popular and most fiercely competed team event in the Combat Group. For the first six years it was 33 Squadron which ruled the court, they finally lost the trophy in 1993 to 31 Squadron. From there onward it was a mixed result, 31 Squadron won it in 2001 as well, in 2002 it was 33 Squadron which won it 'after a long break, we have won the trophy'.<sup>2</sup> In March 2000, Combat Group stood first in Inter Base Hockey Championship held at Rahwali, they also won the Inter Base Football Championship which was held at Multan. It is worth mentioning that Hockey despite being national game was never played in the Combat Group, one reason being it is expensive and second it requires a grassy ground and some basic skills as well. In the Hockey final, that was played between the 499 EME Battalion and 33 Squadron on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2001, no less than eleven officers represented 33 Squadron.

Football is another very popular game and is played with passion, sometime these passions exceeds the army discipline marks as well. In 1992, both Combat Squadrons were sent on a route march as a result of this overflowing passion in the ground. In March 1999, the first ever Combat Group Football tournament was held, in which 31 Squadron won on penalty kicks. Major Wajahat Ghumman got his wrist fractured during the match, Panzers won mainly due to the good goal keeping by Captain Adnan, other notable players from winning team included Captains Farrukh, Azam and Mumtaz. In 2002 the football finale involving combat elements against EME (which brings the best out of Cobras) resulted with a warning for the commanding officer. History repeats itself is an old idiom, in 2014 in another football match Captain Asad of Panzers also got his hand fractured and he is still recovering.

In the same year(1999) the first Combat Group inter squadron and unit basketball championship was also held and later the inter base basketball tournament was also organised at Multan, Major General Ashraf Choudhry the GOC Army Aviation was the chief guest. One of the longest basketball match in the history of the game itself was played between the

1 31 Squadron Digest of Service

2 33 Squadron Digest of Service





***Brigadier Pervaiz giving Trophy to Lieutenant Colonel Raza***

the very first time in Army Aviation Combat Group stood first. In 2003, another landmark was the first ever sports meet which was held at Rahwali, Combat Group was declared the champion, they won 100, 200, 1500 meters races, there were separate races for the clerks and cooks which were also won by the Combat Group. In 2004, Combat Group again won the overall championship trophy. Although inter unit athletics competition was first held in 1996 under supervision of 499 EME Battalion. Gunner Yousaf of 31 Squadron had won the 1500 and 3000 meters race and Havildar Munawar of same squadron was the gold medallist in triple jump.

In April 2003 Badminton competition was introduced for the first time, badminton as a sports requires calm air and is almost impossible to play in windy conditions and that is one major reason that it has been unable to find a spot in regular army sports moot. For long many chauvinist consider it as a female sports but in reality it is a very tough sports. One advantage which the aviation bases have is the availability of covered courts inside the hangars, thus the matches and the sports itself is played within deserted hangars by moving the stores aside. Major Faqir Auranbgzeb and Major Jamshed won it for the Combat Base. In 2017, Lieutenant Colonel Mohsin Makhdoom and Major Kazim Nawaz of Air wolves won the double match. In 2004, Inter Base assault course competitions was also introduced in Army Aviation for the first time and Combat Group won it. Combat Group

two arch rivals Panzers and Air Wolves in 2003, the match lasted for two days. It started on the evening and as the one squadron started losing, it started taking cover under the endless pleas and sports legal lacunas, so much that darkness fell and it was resumed next morning.

On the individual level, Major Usman Shuja Khan (Air Wolves) stands out as a class of his own in Squash. Major Usman won gold medal in Army Squash championship in 1998, later he represented Army in Inter Services Squash championship in 27<sup>th</sup> National Games. Next year he again won gold medal in Army Squash championship and also won gold medal in Inter Services Squash championship at Karachi, Usman as a matter of fact remained undefeated Army Squash champion from 1998-2001, he also won silver medal in 2001 in National Games held at Lahore. Another officer of repute and standing was Captain Faisal Kamal Hayat who won gold medal in 1999 in Wushu , national championship and won a bronze medal in same sport in National Games of 2001.

In September 2002 the *Inter Base Small Arms Firing* competition was held for



***Brigadier Taqi to Havildar Ashraf***





## JAVED JAHAN SPORTS COMPLEX

INAUGURATED BY

MRS. LT COL JAVED JAHAN

29 APRIL 2017







***Brigadier Tahir giving Cup to Major Mansoor***

Volleyball matches were also played in the small ground adjacent to the car park. It was in 2016 that a dedicated sports ground Javed Jahan has been inaugurated and hopefully very soon it will be covered with shades of trees which have been planted.

There are certain competitions which are aviation oriented like strip competitions in which fixed wing aircraft and young pilots compete. Top Gun was another competition which was introduced in April 2003 among the Cobra pilots, at Cobra ranges and families were also allowed to witness it, they were facilitated by providing them transport from Mess to ranges. Air traffic Control (ATC) is another competition unique to Army Aviation. Combat Group also organise and takes part in the Hifz-O-Qirat, Urdu and English Declamation (for officers and soldiers) competitions.<sup>3</sup> 31 Squadron won the army declamation in 1998, it also won Army religious Teachers (RT) declamation contest too in the same year. The Year 2002 Inter Base Qirat competition was won by the Combat Group. Naib Khateeb Hafiz Mukhtar

apart from taking part in sports competitions held under Army Aviation Command also takes part in the Logistics Area Multan sports competitions, 2006 was the very first year it became participant and won Kabbadi and stood second in Volleyball. Kabbadi has never been played in Aviation or in the Combat Group, although a very popular game among the soldiers. This event generated a lot of enthusiasm among troops and this is always the main aim of any sports competition in army. Combat Group won the Logistic Area football trophy as well Major Naveed Zafar (31 Squadron) was the Group team captain. Traditionally sportsmen are given special privileges in the army and Combat Group is no exception however the Combat Group lacks the requisite manpower, manpower it has, is all committed to the flying and maintenance of the aircraft and helicopters thus to spare a soldier or an officer for a sport is almost unthinkable in Combat Group. Multan Base never had the facilities for the organised games and sports events; the open wide space was used both as football, hockey and cricket ground. The cemented tarmac was converted into a basketball court fortnight before the matches, the wooden board often lacked requisite bounce.



***Winning Commanding Officer***











Ahmed (3 FAAR) won the Army Qirat Competition in 2004, he later won the Inter Services Qirat and also represented Pakistan in the International Armed Forces Qirat Competition held at Iran in 2004. In 2005, Combat Group retained the first positions in both Qirat and Declamation; it was second in both categories for the soldiers. In 2015 the Group stood first, in 2017 in the Inter Unit Hifz and Qirat competition, Hafiz Mazhar and Hafiz Yaseen Majeed both from 499 EME Battalion stood first in Hifz and Qirat respectively. Another prominent qari was Khateed Abdul Majeed Chistian of 33 Squadron, he was declared as the best in 2014 along with Gunner Muhammad Younis. During spring season, competitions are held and organised in cantonment for gardens, in 2008 and 2009, 33 Squadron was awarded the first prize apart from the gardeners, Captain Asad took a keen interest in it. Polo traditionally is not encouraged in Army Aviation and neither officers are detailed for equitation course at Mona, very few keen aviators have managed to get the course (mostly through the courtesy of second in command). Reason being, the inherent danger in the horse riding. Colonel Wajahat Ghumman represented Corps Polo team in 2013, later as commander of Combat Group he represented Corps Polo team at Lahore in 2016. Captain Syed Omar Waqas of Air Wolves in 2014 also represented Corps Polo team at Karachi which stood second.



*Lieutenant Colonel Imad, Brigadier Rizwan, Captain Naveed, (PACES Championship)*

Air Mustang is a new entity, they won their first ever sports competition in 2011 when they stood first in inter unit officers Badminton championship, in 2012 they were runners-up in inter unit Volleyball competition. In 2017, they won the first ever team trophy by lifting the inter unit Baseball championship and finally in 2018, they won the much coveted inter unit small arms trophy. In December 2016, Naib Khateeb Muhammad Sattar was declared the best Qari in inter unit Hifz competition, he was awarded with cash prize in a durbar and later a tea break was also arranged in his honour.<sup>4</sup> PACES is a new competition introduced only recently in Pakistan Army, it demands physical fitness, agility and presence of mind, involves firing with weapons, running and endurance. In March 2018, they were held for the very first time in Combat Group and later Group won it in the inter bases Paces competition.

<sup>4</sup> 35 Squadron Digest of Service.





## Aviation ‘Cobra’ Mess

Aviation mess Multan was originally constructed for the Aviators in 1979 and remained in its original form, a Class B Mess with a bachelor officer's quarter capacity of almost 31 rooms. The number of aviators at one time was never under 100 including almost thirty-four married officers. This was a serious flight safety matter and unfortunately there was no space within the mess to construct new structures. It was under Brigadier Muhammad Tahir that Combat Group was given extra land by the armoured division and resultantly sixteen new rooms were constructed. Other than this addition the mess and its life remains same as it was in the past and this is the beauty of this mess.

Combat Aviation Mess Multan is a lively place, in summer there are late sittings in the lawn on weekends. The internet and its related accessories have definitely altered the mess life, thus the usual jam pack television room for a match is seldom seen. Mess is not merely a place to dine and sleep, it is a grooming institution and as such every commander pays special attention for its upkeep and decorum.

Squadrons are like a family, in which all are grieved on the loss of any dear one, whether an officer or a soldier. It is customary to visit the families of bereaved. Loss of father, mother or children due to law of nature is unavoidable, however the pain is lessening when the comrades are around. All expenses of funeral are borne by the squadron. Similarly, on the occasions of marriage, especially when an officer



*Major General Arif Nazir (GOC Aviation) inaugurating the renovated mess*





*New Block - Bachelor Officers Quarters*

*'He is a Jolly Good Fellow'*

*Mess Meeting*

*Brig (R) Tipu with Mess Waiter Khadim*

*Brig Ghumman with Brig (R) Dawood*





is getting married, all efforts are made to be there no matter how far is the home station, if not all then one officer is detailed to be there with a gift from the other officers. Newly wed couple is dined in at Multan, it is also a time of great anxiety for the groom, as his all secrets are spilled there. Similarly, on the birth of children, bouquets are sent to the family and all ladies of the squadron visit the home and help the mother in coping with the new situation. However, seldom an officer is excused from flying or from any other duty due to any domestic affair.



*Major General Khalil Dar (GOC Aviation) on a Guest Night at Cobra Mess*





*Annual Cobras get together*







## Pakistan Day Parade

Cobras first took part in the Pakistan Day Parade on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1985, it was the first time that public witness the newly inducted Cobras, since then they are an integral part of this impressive parade. Squadrons are designated yearly in turn to take part in the fly past. Almost a week before the actual day, Cobras arrives in Rawalpindi to carryout rehearsals. Flypast requires an intense planning and co-ordination. On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2018, the Turkish T-129 Attack Helicopters also took part in the parade. The participation in parade also provides an opportunity for the squadrons to have get together with their retired comrades; this annual dinner has now become a part of their culture



# 23<sup>rd</sup> March







*Cobra pilots and rotary pilots of Pakistan Navy, Pakistan Air Force, Turkish Army with  
CGS Lt Gen Bilal andz GOC Maj Gen Nasir Dilawar - 24th March 2018*







## Combat Commanders



COL RIFFAT B HUMAYUN <sup>TR</sup> 9 SEP 84



COL SYED SAJD ALI 16 FEB 88



COL M. ASHRAF CH <sup>afwc, psc, ★</sup> 15 AUG 91



COL LIAQAT ALI RAJA <sup>psc</sup> 15 JUN 93



BRIG TPU SULTAN <sup>psc</sup> 18 JUN 96



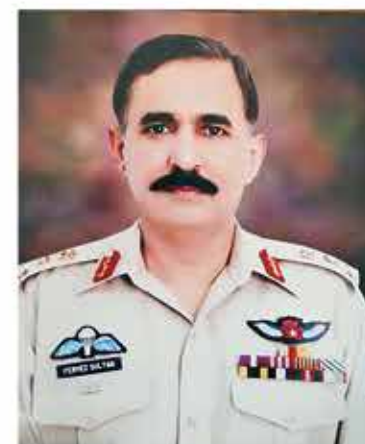
BRIG HASHIM KHAN <sup>TI, PM, psc</sup> 19 AUG 98



BRIG DAWOOD AHMAD <sup>psc</sup> 17 AUG 00



BRIG S. TAQI NASEER RIZVI <sup>afwc, psc, psc, ★</sup> 11 AUG 01



BRIG PERVEZ SULTAN KHAN <sup>psc, ★</sup> 22 AUG 03



BRIG MUHAMMAD TAHIR <sup>afwc, psc, ★</sup> 11 AUG 04



BRIG KHALID MAHMOOD, <sup>psc</sup> 10 JUN 06



BRIG ANJUM IRSHAD KHAN, <sup>psc</sup> 06 DEC 08



BRIG ABID SAEED, <sup>TR, psc</sup> 05 OCT 10



BRIG EJAZ AHMED, <sup>psc</sup> 14 SEP 12



BRIG M. WAJAHAT ALI GHUMAN, <sup>TR, afwc, psc, psc</sup> 23 JUL 14



## General Officers Commanding



MAJ GEN SZM Askree, HI(M)  
05 Aug 1986



MAJ GEN RAHMAT ULLAH, HI(M), T Bt  
11 JUN 1991



MAJ GEN ABDUL RAZZAQ, HI(M) TI(M)  
9 MAY 1996



MAJ GEN M. ASHRAF CHAUDHRY, HI(M)  
28 AUG 1998



MAJ GEN M. AZAM, HI(M), ndc, Psc  
01 NOV 2001



MAJ GEN JAVED ASLAM TAHIR, HI(M), SE  
20 DEC 2004



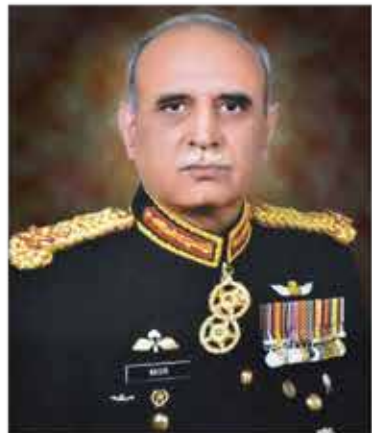
MAJ GEN WAQAR KINGRAVI, HI(M)  
01 JUL 2007



MAJ GEN TANVEER ULLAH KHAN, SI(M), TI(M)  
08 SEP 2008



MAJ GEN RAJA M. ARIF NAZIR, HI(M)  
25 FEB 2010



MAJ GEN NASIR MAHMOOD, HI(M)  
04 JUL 2011



MAJ GEN NASIR DILAWAR SHAH, HI(M)  
17 DEC 2012



MAJ GEN ANJUM ENAYAT, HI(M)  
17 APR 2013



MAJ GEN MUHAMMAD KHALIL DAR, HI(M)  
05 JUL 2014



MAJ GEN NASIR DILAWAR SHAH, HI(M)  
24 MAR 2017









*Change of Command at Combat Group  
October 2018. Brig Raja Munir took over  
from Brig Rizwan Mahmood*





## DY COMD

|    |  |          |
|----|--|----------|
| 1  | Col Muhammad Sarfraz Khan              | Sep 1999 |
| 2  | Col Syed Ali, psc isc                  | Sep 2001 |
| 3  | Col Waseem Akhtar Malik                | Jul 2005 |
| 4  | Col Abid Saeed, TBt, psc ★             | Aug 2007 |
| 5  | Col Babar Mazhar Baig, psc, ptsc       | Aug 2009 |
| 6  | Col Tahir Hameed, TI (M), psc          | May 2011 |
| 7  | Col Abdul Hamid, is                    | Sep 2012 |
| 8  | Lt Col Muhammad Imran Afzal, is        | Nov 2014 |
| 9  | Col Ahmed Mujtaba Azhar, is & Bar, isc | Aug 2015 |
| 10 | Col Naveed Shakoor, Psc                | Aug 2018 |

### GSO-I (Ops) & STD

|    |   |           |
|----|---|-----------|
| 1  | Lt Col Muhammad Bashir Baz, psc           | 15 Apr 85 |
| 2  | Lt Col Muhammad Ashraf Ch, psc ★★         | 10 Aug 86 |
| 3  | Lt Col Javed jahan                        | 31 Oct 87 |
| 4  | Lt Col Saleem Akhund, SJ, psc ★           | 21 Jan 91 |
| 5  | Lt Col Liaqat Ali Raja, psc               | 01 Oct 91 |
| 6  | Lt Col Muhammad Zulfiqar, psc ★           | 12 Sep 93 |
| 7  | Lt Col M A Wahid Khan                     | 15 Sep 94 |
| 8  | Lt Col Nasir Mian, psc, ptsc              | 26 Jan 96 |
| 9  | Lt Col Waqar Ahmad Kingravi, psc, ptsc ★★ | 13 Nov 96 |
| 10 | Lt Col Muhammad Mussadiq Abbasi, psc ★    | 24 Nov 98 |
| 11 | Lt Col Jamshed Iqbal Bajwa, psc, ptsc     | 10 Nov 99 |
| 12 | Lt Col Shahid Sardar, psc ★               | 20 Nov 00 |
| 13 | Lt Col Muhammad Zaigham Tayyab, psc       | 25 Sep 01 |
| 14 | Lt Col Noman Ghafoor, psc                 | 30 Sep 02 |
| 15 | Lt Col Farooq Ahmad Khan, psc, ptsc       | 22 Sep 03 |

### GSO-I (OPS & TRG)

|   |                                 |           |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Lt Col Anjum Irshad Khan, psc ★ | 22 Nov 04 |
| 2 | Lt Col Amir Saeed Toor, psc     | 16 Aug 06 |
| 3 | Lt Col Ejaz Ahmed, psc ★        | 2 Aug 07  |

### GSO-I (OPS)

|   |                                      |           |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Lt Col Rizwan Mahmud, psc ★          | 02 Aug 08 |
| 2 | Lt Col Rizwan Afzal, psc             | 14 Aug 09 |
| 3 | Lt Col Asim Razzaq, psc ★            | 04 Aug 11 |
| 4 | Lt Col Raja Muhammad Munir, psc ★    | 12 Oct 12 |
| 5 | Lt Col Bilal Sarwar, psc             | 19 Jul 13 |
| 6 | Lt Col Muhammad Mohsin Makhdoom, psc | 02 Aug 15 |
| 7 | Lt Col Adeel Ahmed Toor, psc         | 18 Aug 16 |
| 8 | Lt Col Muhammad Imran Akhtar, psc    | 16 Aug 18 |

### ST

|    |                    |
|----|--------------------|
| 1  | Capt Sohaib Akhtar |
| 2  | Capt Muhammad Ib   |
| 3  | Capt Muhammad Iq   |
| 4  | Capt Qasim Pervez  |
| 5  | Capt Muhammad A    |
| 6  | Capt Waqas Habib   |
| 7  | Capt Syed Ahmed S  |
| 8  | Capt Muhammad A    |
| 9  | Maj Aurangzeb Faq  |
| 10 | Maj Syed Shahid H  |

### DA

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| 1 | Maj Nadeem Shdiq    |
| 2 | Maj Kashif Naseer   |
| 3 | Maj Qasim Riaz      |
| 4 | Maj Ovais Ahmed, T  |
| 5 | Maj Musa Khan, Isc  |
| 6 | Maj Syed Zulfiqar A |

*Staff Officers Combat Group*



## AFF CAPT

|                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| Durrani        | 29 Jun 1985 |
| rahim          | 02 Apr 1988 |
| bal Tahir      | 10 May 1990 |
|                | 08 Sep 1991 |
| sif Hayat Khan | 29 Nov 1993 |
| Abbasi         | 23 Sep 1995 |
| Shujah         | 13 Dec 1996 |
| li Khan        | 14 Aug 2000 |
| ir             | 24 Apr 2003 |
| ussain         | 25 Sep 2006 |

## A & QMG

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| Malik, isc  | 07 Jul 2009 |
| Bhatti      | 24 Mar 2011 |
|             | 15 Oct 2012 |
| TI (M)      | 14 Aug 2014 |
| c           | 12 Sep 2016 |
| li, is, Isc | 27 Jul 2018 |

## GSO-II (OPS)

|                                     |    |             |
|-------------------------------------|----|-------------|
| Maj Isar Hussain Jaffery, psc       | *  | 06 Jan 1986 |
| Maj Ashraf Warraich, TBt, psc       |    | 23 Aug 1985 |
| Maj Waqar Ahmed Kingravi, psc, ptsc | ** | 06 Jan 1988 |
| Maj Nasir Mian, psc, ptsc           |    | 05 May 1991 |
| Maj Muhammad Ifzal, TBt, psc        | *  | 12 Sep 1993 |
| Maj Syed Mahboob Haider, is, psc    |    | 17 Jan 1995 |
| Maj Abid Saeed, psc                 | *  | 24 Mar 1997 |
| Maj Muhammad Ehtisham Amir, psc     | *  | 23 Jan 1999 |
| Maj Muhammad Zaigham Tayyab, psc    |    | 20 Nov 2000 |
| Maj Mansoor Hussain, psc            |    | 15 Jan 2002 |
| Maj Rehan Maqsood Alam, psc         | *  | 15 Jan 2004 |

## GSO-II (OPS & TRG)

|                                 |             |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Maj Amjad Mahmood, psc          | 28 Apr 2005 |
| Maj Hassan Solat, psc           | 18 Jan 2006 |
| Maj Kamran Saleem, psc          | 17 Jan 2008 |
| Maj Khalid Iqbal, psc           | 21 Jul 2009 |
| Maj Ghulam Murtaza, psc         | 27 Oct 2011 |
| Maj Khalid Yaqub Awan psc       | 16 Jul 2012 |
| Maj Imaad Hussain Siddiqui, psc | 07 Jul 2013 |
| Maj Asif Hayat, psc             | 10 Apr 2015 |
| Maj Muhammad Nauman Abbasi, psc | 07 Aug 2015 |
| Maj Sajid Mehar, psc            | 25 Sep 2016 |
| Maj Harris Hussain, psc         | 01 Sep 2017 |
| Maj Muhammad Faisal, psc        | 01 Aug 2018 |

## AA & QMG

|    |                                      |             |
|----|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1  | Lt Col Muhammad Abdul Wahid Khan     | 09 Mar 1990 |
| 2  | Lt Col Mansoor Saeed                 | 14 Dec 1994 |
| 3  | Lt Col Raheel Hafeez Sehgal, SJ      | 23 Aug 1996 |
| 4  | Lt Col Nofal Manzoor                 | 19 Dec 1998 |
| 5  | Lt Col Qutaibah Saleem, Isc          | 11 Jan 2001 |
| 6  | Lt Col Israr Ul Hassan Syed          | 09 Nov 2001 |
| 7  | Lt Col Ishtiaq Aziz Kayani, Isc      | 07 Oct 2003 |
| 8  | Lt Col Zahid Rasool Grewal, Isc      | 19 Aug 2006 |
| 9  | Lt Col Hameed Ullah Khan, Isc        | 21 Jul 2007 |
| 10 | Lt Col Muhammad Afzal Kamal, Isc     | 21 Oct 2009 |
| 11 | Lt Col Rehan Waheed                  | 05 Oct 2010 |
| 12 | Lt Col Muhammad Tariq, Isc           | 10 Jan 2011 |
| 13 | Lt Col Javed Iqbal, Isc              | 31 Jul 2011 |
| 14 | Lt Col Muhammad Atif Saeed, is       | 01 Nov 2013 |
| 15 | Lt Col Farrukh Mustafa Saleem Isc    | 07 Aug 2015 |
| 16 | Lt Col Syed Asif Hussain, Isc        | 01 Nov 2016 |
| 17 | Lt Col M. Jawad Hanif, Isc CMILT(UK) | 16 Aug 2017 |
| 18 | Lt Col Moazam Javed, Isc             | 01 Aug 2018 |



# Panzer Leaders



## HONOURS AND AWARDS

|             |                          |                |   |
|-------------|--------------------------|----------------|---|
| 14 AUG 2005 | LT COL ABID SAEED        | OP TIGHT NOOSE | ★ |
| 14 AUG 2005 | MAJ MUHAMMAD NABEEL KHAN | OP TIGHT NOOSE | ★ |
| 14 AUG 2005 | MAJ NAEEM ULLAH KHATTAK  | OP TIGHT NOOSE | ★ |
| 14 AUG 2005 | MAJ NAEEM AMIR AZEEM     | OP TIGHT NOOSE | ★ |
| 14 AUG 2009 | CAPT ASIM KARIM KHAN     | OP RAH-E-RAST  | ★ |
| 14 AUG 2009 | MAJ AMIR AZAM            | OP RAH-E-RAST  | ★ |
| 23 MAR 2010 | MAJ IFTIKHAR AHMED       | OP RAH-E-NIJAT | ★ |
| 23 MAR 2010 | MAJ NADEEM KHAN          | OP RAH-E-NIJAT | ★ |
| 23 MAR 2010 | CAPT ASIM KARIM KHAN     | OP RAH-E-NIJAT | ★ |
| 23 MAR 2010 | CAPT MAZHAR ALI          | OP RAH-E-NIJAT | ★ |
| 14 AUG 2016 | MAJ SHAHID AHMED         | OP ZARB-E-AZB  | ★ |
| 14 AUG 2016 | MAJ NAUMAN HAIDER TOOR   | OP ZARB-E-AZB  | ★ |
| 14 AUG 2016 | MAJ NAUMAN BABAR         | OP ZARB-E-AZB  | ★ |
| 14 AUG 2016 | MAJ NASIR AHMED KHAN     | OP ZARB-E-AZB  | ★ |

## HISTORY SPEAKS FOR THE GLORY THE PANZERS

PANZERS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN MANY ARMY LEVEL EXERCISES. SOME OF THESE EXERCISES STILL HAVE THE IMPRINTS OF PARTICIPATION BY PANZERS:-

- **DECEMBER 1986.** THE PRIME MINISTER MR MUHAMMAD KHAN JUNEJO WITNESSED FIRING BY PANZERS IN 1 ARMOUR DIVISION EXERCISE.
- **NOVEMBER 1987.** PANZERS PARTICIPATED IN EXERCISE "KNIGHT RIDERS".
- **DECEMBER 1989.** SQUADRON PARTICIPATED IN ARMY'S FIRST LARGE SCALE EXERCISE, "ZARB-E-MOMIN". PRIME MINISTER MRS. BENAZIR BHUTTO WITNESSED PANZERS IN ACTION.
- **DECEMBER 1992.** LIEUTENANT GENERAL FARRUKH KHAN AND JAHANGIR KARAMAT WITNESSED JOINT AIR ATTACK TEAM FIRING BY PANZERS.
- **DECEMBER 1995.** PRESIDENT OF PAKISTAN WITNESSED FIRE POWER DEMONSTRATION BY PANZERS DURING EXERCISE "AL-KHALID II".
- **DECEMBER 1997.** PAKISTAN AIRFORCE PILOTS WERE DEEPLY IMPRESSED BY THE SPIRIT OF ATTACK DISPLAYED BY THE PANZERS IN EXERCISE "SAFFRON BANDIT".
- EXERCISE "FLYING BREVET" WAS THE FIRST AVIATION LEVEL EXERCISE. PANZERS WERE FULLY INCORPORATED THROUGHOUT THE EXERCISE.
- **OCTOBER 2001.** SQUADRON TOOK PART IN EXERCISE "BLACK HAWK".
- PANZERS TOOK PART IN ARMY'S ROLE OF NATION BUILDING ALONGWITH THE FIELD ARMY. PILOTS OF THIS SQUADRON PARTICIPATED IN:-
  - ELECTION DUTIES
  - CENSUS DUTIES
  - SURVEY OF SCHOOLS

PANZERS HAVE BEEN PARTICIPATING IN SPORTS EVENTS WITH TRADITIONAL ZEAL. THE SPIRITS OF ATTACK EVEN IN SPORTS IS EVERY THING, WHICH IS EVIDENT FROM FOLLOWING AWARDS/ TROPHIES WON BY US:-

|              |       |      |      |      |      |      |
|--------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|
| • FOOTBALL   | YEARS | 1999 | 2000 | 2002 | 2003 |      |
| • BASKETBALL | YEARS | 1996 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2003 |
| • SQUASH     | YEARS | 2002 | 2003 |      |      |      |
| • HIF        | YEARS | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |      |      |
| • QUR'AN     | YEARS | 2000 | 2002 |      |      |      |
| • BADMINTON  | YEAR  | 2002 |      |      |      |      |

## HISTORY SPEAKS FOR THE GLORY THE PANZERS

THE 12<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF MARCH 1985 SAW THE RAISING OF FIRST COMBAT AVIATION UNIT OF PAKISTAN ARMY DESIGNATED AS 31 ARMY AVIATION COMBAT SQUADRON. IT WAS NAMED AGAINST 31 ARMOUR DIVISION OF INDIAN ARMY AND DREW INSPIRATION FROM THE UNSTOPPABLE GERMAN PANZER DIVISIONS TO ADOPT ITS CALL SIGN "PANZER". MAJ SALEEM AKHUND, SJ WAS HONOURED TO LEAD THE RAISING TEAM TILL 6<sup>TH</sup> JULY 1985, WHO LATER WAS RELIEVED BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL JAVED JEHAN AS THE FIRST COMMANDING OFFICER OF PANZERS. THE MOTTO "SPIRIT OF ATTACK IS EVERY THING" WAS ADOPTED BY THE SQUADRON.

THE SQUADRON DISTINGUISHES ITSELF BY BEING THE ONLY AVIATION ESTABLISHMENT TO BE AFFILIATED WITH UNIT OF A FOREIGN COUNTRY. A VISIT OF ROYAL JORDANIAN AIRFORCE (RJAF) TEAM TO ARMY AVIATION COMBAT GROUP WAS THE INITIATION OF AFFILIATION BETWEEN PANZERS AND 10 RJAF SQUADRON AND CULMINATED IN UNFOLDING OF EVENTS:-

- **MARCH 1987** - FIRST VISIT BY JORDANIAN TEAM
- **SEPTEMBER 1988** - RECIPROCAL VISIT BY PAKISTANI TEAM (LIEUTENANT COLONEL MUHAMMAD ASHRAF CHAUDARY COMMANDING OFFICER)
- **JUNE 1994** - FLAG PRESENTATION CEREMONY WAS HELD AT AMMAN WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY DELEGATION COMPRISING OF:-
  - MAJOR GENERAL REHMAT ULLAH (GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING, ARMY AVIATION)
  - LIEUTENANT COLONEL KAUKAB AZIZ BHATTI (COMMANDING OFFICER)
  - CAPTAIN NABEEL KHAN (ADJUTANT)
  - CAPTAIN HASSAN SIKANDER RANA (OFFICER COMMANDING LIGHT AID DETACHMENT)
- **FEBRUARY 1997** - AN AFFILIATION CEREMONY WITH 10 RJAF SQUADRON WAS HELD AT ARMY AVIATION BASE MULTAN WHICH WAS GRACED BY CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF, LIEUTENANT GENERAL IFTIKHAR ALI KHAN. LIEUTENANT COLONEL SAYED ALI RECEIVED THE FLAG OF 10 RJAF SQUADRON. THE PANZERS ALSO ACHIEVED THE UNIQUE HONOUR OF CARRYING NATIONAL STANDARD AND REGIMENTAL COLOUR ON THE OCCASION.

PANZERS WITH THE MOTTO OF "THE SPIRIT OF ATTACK IS EVERY THING" HAD BEEN PURSUING THE AIM OF REACHING PROVISIONAL ZENITH SINCE RAISING. INTEGRATED TRAINING WITH FIELD FORMATIONS IS ONE OF THE LAND MARKS TOWARDS THIS END.





*Maj Gen Anjum (GOC Avn) and Lt Col Salman putting on the ranks to Maj Gen Muhammad Tahir*





*Panzers with Colonel of the Squadron, Major General Muhammad Tahir*





*30 April 2017*





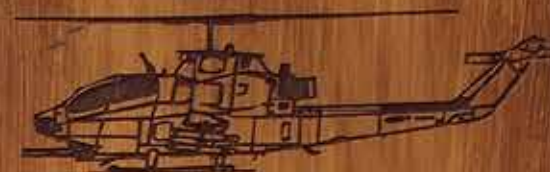








# AIR WOLVES



Abbas Hussain  
 Abdul Ghafoor  
 Abdul Hamid  
 Abdul Majid  
 Abdul Mateen  
 Abid Aziz  
 Abid Hassan  
 Abid Saeed  
 Adnan Habib  
 Ahmed Junaid  
 Ahmed Mujtaba  
 Ahsan ud Din  
 Aleem Ahsan  
 Amer Saeed  
 Amir Hamza  
 Anjum Hussain  
 Anjum Raffi  
 Arfaan Tahir  
 Arshad Farooq  
 Arshad Iqbal  
 Asad Hafeez  
 Asad Kamal  
 Ashfaq Hussain  
 Ashraf Warraich  
 Asim Razzaque  
 Atif Qayyum  
 Babar Rashid  
 Babar Yunus  
 Basharat Aman  
 Bilal Suhaib

Bilal Sultan Khan  
 Dawood Ahmed  
 Ejaz Ahmed  
 Faisal Islam  
 Faisal Kamal  
 Fakhar Ul Islam  
 Fazal Muqeem  
 Hamid Ali  
 Hamid Riaz  
 Hashim Khan  
 Hidayat Ullah  
 Humayun Kasi  
 Imran Ahmad  
 Imran Rafiq  
 Imran Yasin  
 Inam Karim  
 Irfan Hassan  
 Javed Rafiq  
 Kamran Riaz  
 Kamran Shah  
 Kashif Farooq  
 Kashif Fayyaz  
 Kashif Raza  
 Kaukab Aziz  
 Khalid Hassan  
 Khalid Mahmood  
 Khalid Maooz  
 Khawar Rasheed  
 Khurram Rasool  
 M. Adnan Jaffar

M. Ahmed Khan  
 M. Ahmed Rashaad  
 M. Arif Nazir  
 M. Ashraf Warriach  
 M. Ibrahim Jan  
 M. Jahantab Asghar  
 M. Omer Talal  
 M. Raza Farooq  
 M. Sami Ullah  
 M. Shabab Khan  
 M. Shahid Butt  
 M. Tahir Akram  
 M. Tehseen Khan  
 M. Umar Farooq  
 M. Waqas Shehzad  
 M. Yousaf Anjum  
 M. Zeeshan Azhar  
 M.A. Asif Sirhindi  
 Mahmood Ahmad  
 Mahmood Hussain  
 Mahmood ul Hassan  
 Mansoor Fazal  
 Mehtab Khaliq  
 Mian Amjad  
 Muhammad Ali  
 Muhammad Asad  
 Muhammad Farooq  
 Muhammad Hamid  
 Muhammad Ifzal  
 Muhammad Naeem

Muhammad Raahim  
 Muhammad Saeed  
 Muhammad Tahir  
 Muhammad Tufail  
 Muhammad Yasir  
 Muhammad Zaheer  
 Muhammad Zubair  
 Murtaza Saeed  
 Mussadiq Abbasi  
 Muzzamil Tajamul  
 Nadeem Yousaf  
 Naqi Abbas  
 Nasheed Iqbal  
 Nasir Mian  
 Nauman Khan  
 Naveed Shakoor  
 Nayyar Iqbal  
 Pervez Sultan Khan  
 Qutaibah Saleem  
 R.G. Foulds  
 Raja Khayam  
 Raja M. Munir  
 Rashid Kifait  
 Rehan Waheed  
 Rizwan Ahmed  
 S. Farhat Ali  
 S. Hammad Ali  
 S. Hammad Dabir  
 S. Naeem Raza  
 S. Omer Waqas

S. Taqi Naseer Rizvi  
 S. Tashkeel Haider  
 S. Tassalimoon Tauqir  
 Sajid Ilyas Satti  
 Sajid Sattar  
 Saleem Akhund  
 Saleem Khan  
 Sayed Ali  
 Shafique Ur Rehman  
 Shahbaz Shamsheer  
 Shahid A.H. Ansari  
 Sheikh Tallat  
 Shmayal Raza  
 Shuja Zafar Ali  
 Tahir Altaf  
 Tanvir Ahmed  
 Tariq Hameed  
 Tariq Mahmood  
 Tariq Salim  
 Tughrul Bashir  
 Umair Latif  
 Umair Ur Rehman  
 Umar Mushtaq  
 Usman Ahmed Nagra  
 Usman Shujaa  
 Wahid Khan  
 Waseem Akhtar  
 Waseem Hayat  
 Yasir Mumtaz  
 Zafar Iqbal Niazi

Zafar Junaid Usmani  
 Zafar Saleem  
 Zahid Anwar  
 Zahid Qayyum  
 Aurangzeb Alamgir Azmat  
 Agha Tahir Gul  
 Asad Hameed Bhatti  
 Abid Shaheen Rao  
 Adil Shaheed  
 Hassan Jamil  
 Hashir Inayat Khan  
 Imran Khan  
 Kashif Mehmoob  
 Kashif Zaib  
 Muhammad Amer Saeed  
 Muhammad Hamid  
 Muhammad Kamran Ullah Khan  
 Muhammad Mohsin Makhdoom  
 Muhammad Farooq  
 Muhammad Ali Raj  
 Muhammad Awais  
 Muhammad Kazim Nawaz Khan  
 Mazhar Ali  
 Muhammad Waseem Khan  
 Muhammad Asim  
 Raja Sufian Sohrab  
 Syed Hammad Dabir  
 Safdar Abbas Saqib  
 Sofian Ahmed  
 Zaheer Abbas



Presented By: Maj Bilal Sultan / Maj Hamid Riaz





## COMMANDING OFFICERS

|     |   |                 |
|-----|---|-----------------|
| 1.  | <i>Lt Col Asad Kamal</i>                    | <i>Apr 1985</i> |
| 2.  | <i>Lt Col Saleem Akhwand SJ, Psc</i>        | <i>Mar 1989</i> |
| 3.  | <i>Lt Col Saleem Khan</i>                   | <i>Jan 1991</i> |
| 4.  | <i>Lt Col Arshad Farooq, Psc</i>            | <i>Sep 1992</i> |
| 5.  | <i>Lt Col Ahsan Janjua</i>                  | <i>Jun 1994</i> |
| 6.  | <i>Lt Col Pervez Sultan Khan, Psc, ISC</i>  | <i>Sep 1996</i> |
| 7.  | <i>Lt Col Abid Hassan Malik Psc</i>         | <i>Aug 1998</i> |
| 8.  | <i>Lt Col Waseem Akhtar Malik</i>           | <i>Aug 2000</i> |
| 9.  | <i>Lt Col Muhammad Raza Farooq Tbt, ISC</i> | <i>Sep 2002</i> |
| 10. | <i>Lt Col Abdul Hamid, IS</i>               | <i>Aug 2005</i> |
| 11. | <i>Lt Col Irfan Hassan Tbt, Psc</i>         | <i>Jul 2007</i> |
| 12. | <i>Lt Col Abid Aziz</i>                     | <i>Aug 2009</i> |
| 13. | <i>Lt Col Hamid Ali, ISC</i>                | <i>Aug 2011</i> |
| 14. | <i>Lt Col Nadeem Yousaf, Psc</i>            | <i>Aug 2012</i> |
| 15. | <i>Lt Col Naveed Shakoor, Psc</i>           | <i>Jul 2014</i> |
| 16. | <i>Lt Col Muhammad Mohsin Makhdoom, Psc</i> | <i>Aug 2016</i> |



*Col Saleem Khan with Brig (Late) Saleem Akhwand SJ*





*Colonel of the Air Wolves, Brigadier Pervaiz Sultan with Squadron*





*Colonel of the Air Wolves Squadron Brigadier Pervaiz Sultan with serving and retired pilots*





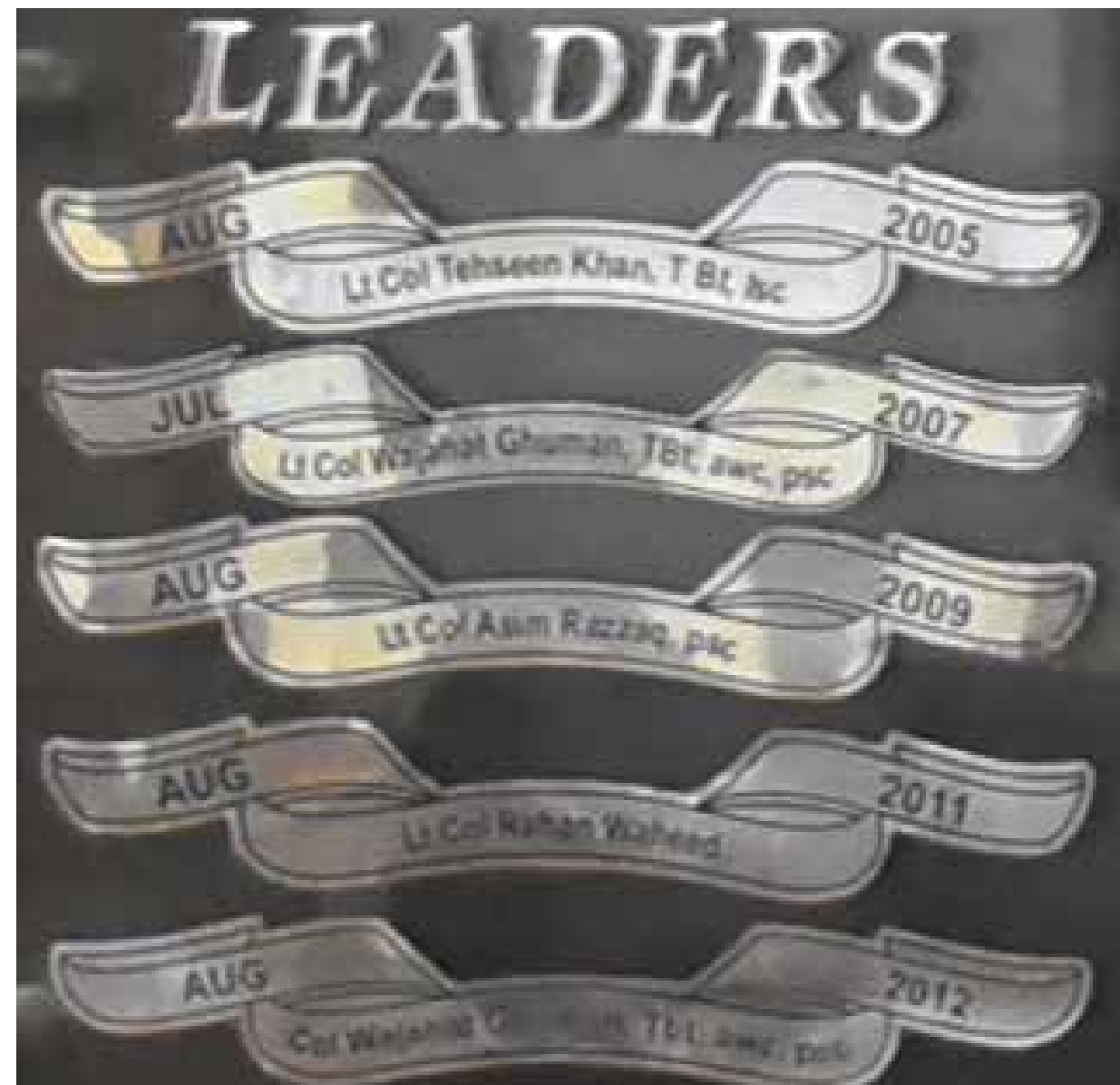
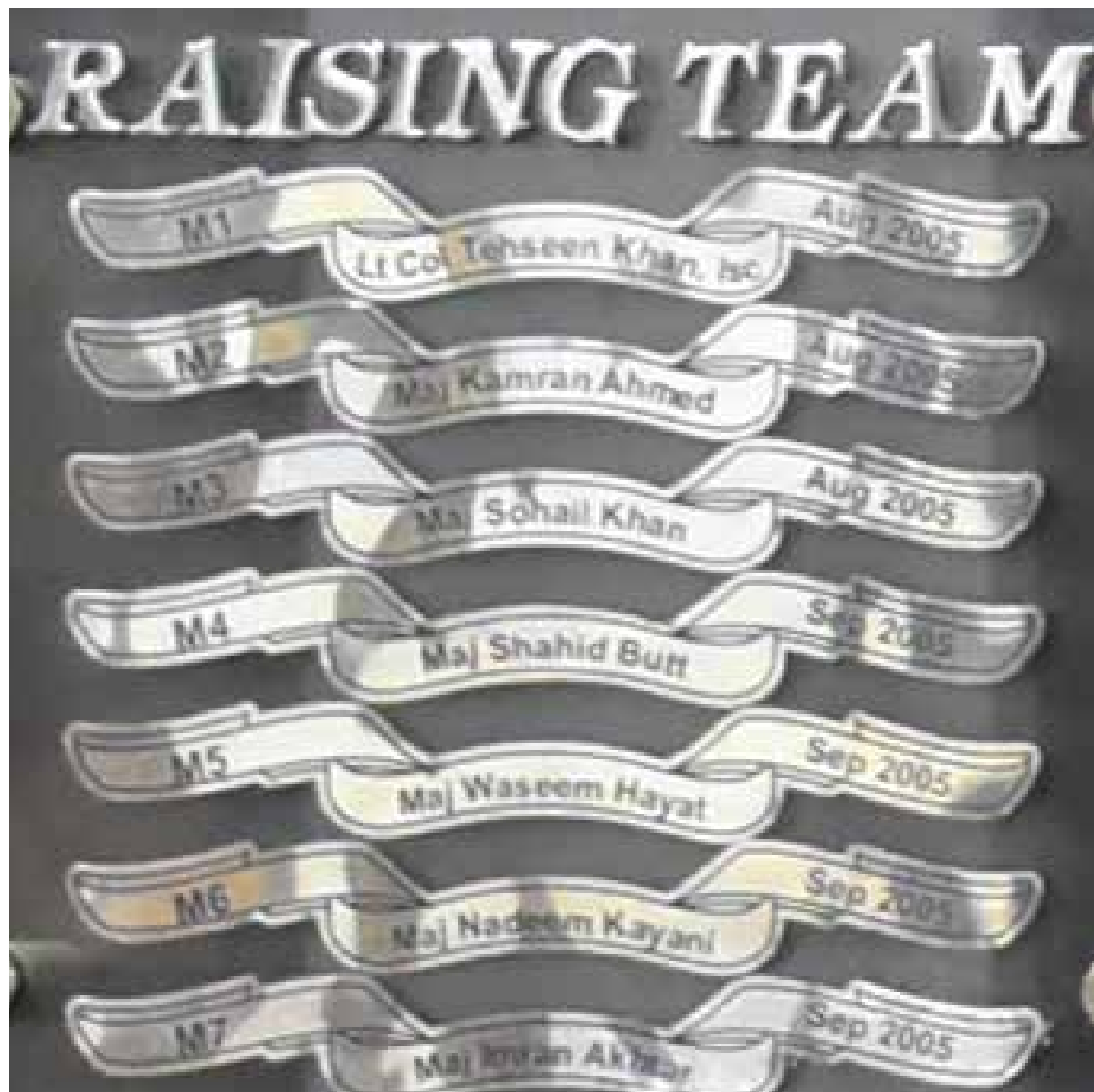
*Maj Gen Anjum DG Aviation with Air Wolves*





*Maj Gen Khalil Dar GOC Aviation with Air Mustangs*













*Subedar Murtaza*

*Maj Asif  
DAA&QMG*

*Brig Munir  
Comd*

*Lt Col Asif  
CO*

*Maj Hassan*

*Maj Kashif*





## COMMANDERS GP-IV

|     |   |         |
|-----|---|---------|
| ■   | LT COL MUHAMMAD NAFEES-UL-HAQ               | 2-4-85  |
|     | COL KHALID MEHMOOD, psc, ptsc               | 17-8-85 |
| ✱ ✱ | COL MIAN SALIM-UD-DIN, afwc, psc, flsc (UK) | 30-9-86 |
| ✱   | LT COL HISAM ULLAH BEG, SI (M)              | 9-8-88  |
| ✱   | COL MUHAMMAD NAFEES-UL-HAQ                  | 15-8-89 |

## COs 499 EME BN

|     |  |          |
|-----|--|----------|
| ✱   | LT COL SHAHID JAMIL, psc                 | 1-8-91   |
|     | LT COL FARIDDOON                         | 4-12-92  |
|     | MAJ HAFIZ SIBGHAT ULLAH FAZIL, (I) qsl   | 6-3-94   |
|     | LT COL MAJID ULLAH, psc, ptsc            | 29-8-94  |
|     | LT COL MAHMOOD AHMAD, psc, ptsc          | 4-3-96   |
|     | LT COL MANSOOR AKRAM                     | 29-6-98  |
|     | LT COL NASIR MAQSOOD SULERY              | 31-10-00 |
|     | LT COL WAQAR MUHAMMAD, TI (M), (I) qsl   | 17-9-02  |
| ✱ ✱ | LT COL REHAN ABDUL BAQI, afwc, psc, ptsc | 19-7-04  |
| ✱ ✱ | LT COL NAUMAN AHMED HASHMI, psc, ptsc    | 2-7-05   |
|     | LT COL ANSAR ALI KHAN, qsl               | 25-7-07  |
|     | LT COL HASSAN SIKANDAR RANA, lsc         | 7-8-09   |
|     | LT COL MUHAMMAD IFTIKHAR AKRAM, psc      | 29-7-11  |
|     | LT COL FAWAD FARRUKH BUTT, psc           | 21-8-13  |
|     | LT COL HASEEB KHALID CHUGHTAI, psc       | 21-8-15  |
|     | LT COL MUDASSIR HUSSAIN, MSc             | 4-8-17   |





*Tribute to 499 EME Battalion*











**OP AL - MIZAN  
(TERAH VALLEY)**  
MAJ MUDASSAR RAZZAQ SHAHEED



**OP SAID GAI  
(SAID GAI)**  
LT COL TEHSEEN KHAN



**OP EAGLSTRIKE I & II  
(LADDAR)**  
LT COL WAJAHAT GHUMAN



**OP RAH-E-RAST  
(BUNAIR)**  
MAJ KHALID MAOOZ



MAJ KASHIF ANWAR  
CAPT IMAAD SIDDIQUI  
MAJ IMRAN AKHTAR  
MAJ FAHAD MUSTAFA  
MAJ ALI RAJ  
MAJ SALMAN MUNIR HALIK

LT COL MUHAMMAD IMRAN  
MAJ RAJA MUSTAFA ABBAS  
MAJ RASHID JAFFAR  
CAPT MUHAMMAD AFTAB GAMMAR  
MAJ MOAZAM JAVED



MAJ KHALID MAOOZ  
MAJ SANAULLAH  
CAPT REHAN ALI  
CAPT FURQAN KHALIL  
CAPT MUHAMMAD AWAIS  
MAJ SALMAN OMER

MAJ SOHAIL KHAN  
LT HASEEB ULLAH  
LT COL ASIM RAZZAQ  
MAJ SAJID RAZA  
CAPT JAUHAR AYUB

#### SOUTH WAZIRISTAN

|              |               |           |
|--------------|---------------|-----------|
| WARA         | JANDOL        | MANAZAI   |
| SARA BODA    | SHAKAI VALLEY | LADDAR    |
| SHIN WARDAK  | SEBWEKAI      | LEH FORT  |
| CHAK MALAI   | MAZAKAI       | TIARZA    |
| SANZILA      | MAIDAN ALGAT  | IONAH KOT |
| SARWAND      | KANI GRAM     | AM RANG   |
| ANGDOOR ADRA | SARKANDA      | TANAI     |
| ASHAN MANZA  |               | VALLEY    |
| KOT KAI      | TAKRAIBAR     | KEE       |
| JAKATA       | JHAIBAR       |           |
| SPIN JAMAT   | SHERWAN       |           |
| GHUT GHUNDAL | SHI PAN       |           |

#### KURRAI

|            |       |      |
|------------|-------|------|
| PARACHINAR | THAL  | JOGI |
|            | SADDA |      |

#### ORAKZAI

|        |         |      |
|--------|---------|------|
| KALATA | GHELJU  | MANA |
| TERAH  | MUKASAR | BORI |

#### KHYBER

|        |             |      |
|--------|-------------|------|
| JAROSI | LANDI KOTAI | BRUD |
|--------|-------------|------|

#### BALUCHISTAN

|          |        |      |
|----------|--------|------|
| SIBI     | KALAT  | UI   |
| DEETUGTI | GHADAI | ABAD |

#### NORTH WAZIRISTAN

|            |            |             |
|------------|------------|-------------|
| MIRAN SHAH | DATTA KHEL | DARRAR      |
| TUTKARAI   | KASSU KHEL | MIR ALI     |
| WACHA BIRI | MANA       | PASH ZIARAT |
| SAID GAI   | RAZMAK     | DOSA        |
| MACHIS     | CHIBAZ     | SPIN WAM    |

|             |      |     |
|-------------|------|-----|
| WALAM       | RA   | ELA |
| SANDA       | LA   | UP  |
| MURUSHKHELA | MANI |     |
| SHALAPLUN   | THAR |     |
| UZA BANDA   | RAIL | U   |
| UCHRAISAR   | BAL  | AGH |

|            |             |       |
|------------|-------------|-------|
| MAH        | I DAD       | FR BA |
| MOMLA      | MARJANA     | HU    |
| MATARI VAL | LUNA VALLEY | AIR   |
| BURANG VAL | LAKRAO      | WAS   |
|            | SHANQZAI    | IRAN  |
|            | THANA       |       |
|            | LAL QILA    |       |



Brig (Maj Gen) Najeeb with Air Mustangs





*Maj Gen Nasir Dilawar GOC Aviation with Brig Rizwan Commander Combat Group and Officers of Combat Group*









### Sitara-I-Basalat

| Serial | Name of Officer                   | Squadron    | Year |
|--------|-----------------------------------|-------------|------|
| 1.     | Major Mudassar Raza Bajwa Shaheed | 35 Squadron | 2010 |

### Tamgha-i-Basalat

| Serial | Name of Officer                                   | Squadron | Year |
|--------|---|----------|------|
| 1.     | Lieutenant Colonel Abid Saeed (brigadier retired) | 31 Sqn   | 2005 |
| 2.     | Col Muhammad Wajahat Ali Ghuman                   | 35 Sqn   | 2007 |
| 3.     | Lieutenant Colonel Raza Farooq                    | 33 Sqn   | 2005 |
| 4.     | Major Nabeel Khan (lieutenant colonel retired)    | 31 Sqn   | 2005 |
| 5.     | Major Naeem Ullah Khattak                         | 31 Sqn   | 2005 |
| 6.     | Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Tehseen Khan          | 35 Sqn   | 2006 |
| 7.     | Major Khalid Rashid Maoz (lieutenant colonel)     | 35 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 8.     | Lieutenant Colonel Irfan Hassan (colonel retired) | 33 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 9.     | Major Sajid Illyas (lieutenant colonel)           | 33 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 10.    | Captain Asim Karim (shaheed)                      | 33 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 11.    | Brigadier Wajahat Ali Ghuman Bar                  | 404 Gp   | 2015 |

### Imtiaz-i-Sanad

| Serial | Name of Officer                       | Squadron  | Year |
|--------|---------------------------------------|-----------|------|
| 1.     | Lieutenant Colonel Anjum Irshad Khan  | 404 Group | 2009 |
| 2.     | Major (Lt Col) Imaad Hussain Siddiqui | 35 Sqn    | 2009 |
| 3.     | Major (Col) Ahmed Mujtaba Azhar       | 33 Sqn    | 2009 |
| 4.     | Major (Col) Muhammad Zubair           | 33 Sqn    | 2009 |
| 5.     | Major Imran Ahmed Farid               | 33 Sqn    | 2009 |
| 6.     | Captain Asim Karim Khan               | 35 Sqn    | 2009 |
| 7.     | Major Iftikhar Ahmed                  | 31 Sqn    | 2010 |
| 8.     | Major (Lt Col) Muhammad Imran Akhtar  | 35 Sqn    | 2010 |



# AIR WOLVES



 Lt Col Raza Farooq  
 Lt Col Irfan Hassan  
 Maj Sajid Ilyas



Maj Ahmed Mujtaba  
 Maj Muhammad Farooq  
 Maj Arfan Tahir Qureshi  
 Maj Muhammad Zubair  
 Maj Omer Talal  
 Maj Imran Ahmed Farid  
 Maj Ahmed Junaid  
 Capt Muhammad Asad

Maj Umer Mushtaq  
 Maj Kashif Raza  
 Maj Bilal Sultan Khan  
 Maj Imran Yasin  
 Maj Hamid Riaz

**SHUHADA**  
 Maj Muhammad Yasir  
 Capt Muhammad Murtaza Saeed  
 Hav Asghar  
 NK Abrar Ahmed

## COAS COMMENDATION CARD

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Lt Col Nasheed Iqbal   | Maj Sajid Ilyas    |
| Maj Umer Mushtaq       | Lt Col Abid Aziz   |
| Maj Abbas Hussain Awan | Maj Babar Younis   |
| Maj Muhammad Farooq    | Maj Adnan Habib    |
| Capt Muhammad Asad     | Maj Khurram Rasool |
| Maj Shamayal Raza      | Capt Kamran Riaz   |
| Lt Col Nadeem Yousaf   | Maj Naqi Abbas     |
| Maj Umair Latif        | Maj Tanvir Ahmed   |



**OP SAID GAI**  
**(SAID GAI)**  
**LT COL TEHSEEN KHAN**



**OP EAGLSTRIKE I & II**  
**(LADDAH)**  
**LT COL WAJAHAT GHUMAN**



**OP RAH-E-RAST**  
**(BUNAIR)**  
**MAJ KHALID MAOOZ**







## OP AL - MIZAN (TERAH VALLEY)

**MAJ MUDASSAR RAZZAQ SHAHEED**

## HONOURS AND AWARDS



|             |                             |                |  |
|-------------|-----------------------------|----------------|--|
| 14 AUG 2005 | LT COL ABID SAEED           | OP TIGHT NOOSE |  |
| 14 AUG 2005 | MAJ MUHAMMAD NABEEL KHAN    | OP TIGHT NOOSE |  |
| 14 AUG 2005 | MAJ NAEEM ULLAH KHATTAK     | OP TIGHT NOOSE |  |
| 14 AUG 2005 | MAJ NAEEM AMIR AZEEM        | OP TIGHT NOOSE |  |
| 14 AUG 2009 | <b>CAPT ASIM KARIM KHAN</b> | OP RAH-E-RAST  |  |
| 14 AUG 2009 | MAJ AMIR AZAM               | OP RAH-E-RAST  |  |
| 23 MAR 2010 | MAJ IFTIKHAR AHMED          | OP RAH-E-NIJAT |  |
| 23 MAR 2010 | MAJ NADEEM KHAN             | OP RAH-E-NIJAT |  |
| 23 MAR 2010 | <b>CAPT ASIM KARIM KHAN</b> | OP RAH-E-NIJAT |  |
| 23 MAR 2010 | CAPT MAZHAR ALI             | OP RAH-E-NIJAT |  |
| 14 AUG 2016 | MAJ SHAHID AHMED            | OP ZARB-E-AZB  |  |
| 14 AUG 2016 | MAJ NAUMAN HAIDER TOOR      | OP ZARB-E-AZB  |  |
| 14 AUG 2016 | MAJ NAUMAN BABAR            | OP ZARB-E-AZB  |  |
| 14 AUG 2016 | MAJ NASIR AHMED KHAN        | OP ZARB-E-AZB  |  |





| Serial | Name of Officer                         | Squadron | Year | Chief of Army Staff Commendation Card |  |          |      |
|--------|---|----------|------|---------------------------------------|--|----------|------|
|        |   |          |      | Serial                                | Name of Officer                        | Squadron | Year |
| 9.     | Major Omer Talal                        | 33 Sqn   | 2010 | 1.                                    | Major Anjum Hussain                    | 35 Sqn   | 2005 |
| 10.    | Major Imran Ahmed Farid                 | 33 Sqn   | 2010 | 2.                                    | Major Sajid Ilyas                      | 33 Sqn   | 2007 |
| 11.    | Major Ahmed Junaid                      | 33 Sqn   | 2010 | 3.                                    | Lt Col (Brig) Asim Razzaq              | 35 Sqn   | 2007 |
| 12.    | Major Muhammad Farooq                   | 33 Sqn   | 2010 | 4.                                    | Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Hamid         | 404 Gp   | 2008 |
| 13.    | Major Fahad Mustafa                     | 35 Sqn   | 2010 | 5.                                    | Major (Col) Naveed Shakoor             | 35 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 14.    | Captain Muhammad Asad                   | 33 Sqn   | 2010 | 6.                                    | Major (Lt Col) Ahmed Farooq            | 31 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 15.    | Major Muhammad Farooq                   | 33 Sqn   | 2012 | 7.                                    | Major (Lt Col) Jawad Hanif             | 31 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 16.    | Major Muhammad Ali Raj                  | 35 Sqn   | 2012 | 8.                                    | Captain Sajid Ilyas                    | 33 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 17.    | Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Imran Afzal | 35 Sqn   | 2013 | 9.                                    | Major (Lt Col) Sajid Raza              | 35 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 18.    | Major Mustafa Abbas                     | 35 Sqn   | 2013 | 10.                                   | Major (Lt Col) Sohail Khan`            | 35 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 19.    | Major Rashid Jaffar                     | 35 Sqn   | 2013 | 11.                                   | Lieutenant (Maj) Haseeb Ullah          | 35 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 20.    | Captain Muhammad Aftab Qamar            | 35 Sqn   | 2013 | 12.                                   | Major Umar Mushtaq                     | 33 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 21.    | Major (Lt Col) Umar Mushtaq             | 33 Sqn   | 2015 | 13.                                   | Lieutenant Colonel Abid Aziz           | 33 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 22.    | Major Moazam Javed                      | 35 Sqn   | 2015 | 14.                                   | Major Sajid Ilyas                      | 33 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 23.    | Major Salman Munir Malik                | 35 Sqn   | 2015 | 15.                                   | Major Abbas Hussain Awan               | 33 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 24.    | Major Arfaan Tahir Qureshi              | 33 Sqn   | 2015 | 16.                                   | Major Muhammad Farooq                  | 33 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 25.    | Colonel (Brigadier) Rizwan Mahmud       | 404 Gp   | 2015 | 17.                                   | Major Babar Younis                     | 33 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 26.    | Major (Lt Col) Moazam Javed             | 35 Sqn   | 2015 | 18.                                   | Major (Lt Col) Khalid Maooz            | 35 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 27.    | Major Kashif Raza                       | 35 Sqn   | 2015 | 19.                                   | Major Khurram Rasool                   | 33 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 28.    | Major Hamid Riaz                        | 33 Sqn   | 2015 | 20.                                   | Lieutenant Colonel Abid Aziz           | 33 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 29.    | Major Bilal Sultan Khan                 | 33 Sqn   | 2015 | 21.                                   | Major Shamyul Raza                     | 33 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 30.    | Major (Lt Col) Imran Waseem             | 33 Sqn   | 2015 | 22.                                   | Captain Muhammad Asad                  | 33 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 31.    | Major (Lt Col) Imran Yasin              | 33 Sqn   | 2015 | 23.                                   | Captain Asif Majeed                    | 31 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 32.    | Major Kashif Raza                       | 33 Sqn   | 2015 | 24.                                   | Captain Jauhar Ayub                    | 35 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 33.    | Major Hamid Riaz                        | 33 Sqn   | 2015 | 25.                                   | Major Umar Mushtaq                     | 33 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 34.    | Major Bilal Sultan Khan                 | 33 Sqn   | 2015 | 26.                                   | Captain (Maj) Rehan Ali                | 35 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 35.    | Major Kashif Anwar                      | 33 Sqn   | 2015 | 27.                                   | Captain (Maj) Furqan Khalil            | 35 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 36.    | Major Muhammad Aftab Qamar              | 35 Sqn   | 2015 | 28.                                   | Major Sanaullah                        | 35 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 37.    | Major Babar Baig                        | 3 FAAR   | 2015 | 29.                                   | Major Shamyul Raza                     | 33 Sqn   | 2012 |
| 38.    | Major Kashif Raza                       | 33 Sqn   | 2015 | 30.                                   | Captain Kamran Riaz                    | 33 Sqn   | 2012 |
| 39.    | Major Muhammad Aftab Qamar              | 35 Sqn   | 2015 | 31.                                   | Lieutenant Colonel Nadeem Yousaf`      | 33 Sqn   | 2013 |
| 40.    | Major Usman Ahmed Khan Nagra            | 33 Sqn   | 2017 | 32.                                   | Major Umar Mushtaq                     | 33 Sqn   | 2013 |
| 41.    | Major Malik Amir Hamza Awan             | 33 Sqn   | 2017 | 33.                                   | Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Atif Saeed | 404 Gp   | 2014 |
| 42.    | Major Shahid Ahmad                      | 31 Sqn   |      | 34.                                   | Lieutenant Colonel Nadeem Yousaf`      | 33 Sqn   | 2014 |
| 43.    | Major Noman Haider Toor                 | 31 Sqn   |      | 35.                                   | Major Umar Mushtaq                     | 33 Sqn   | 2014 |
| 44.    | Major Nasir Ahmad Khan                  | 31 Sqn   |      |                                       |  |          |      |
| 45.    | Major Noman Babar                       | 31 Sqn   |      |                                       |  |          |      |





| Serial | Name of Officer                        | Squadron | Year |
|--------|--|----------|------|
| 36.    | Major Naqi Abbas                       | 33 Sqn   | 2014 |
| 37.    | Major Umair Latif                      | 33 Sqn   | 2014 |
| 38.    | Major Tanvir Ahmed                     | 33 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 39.    | Lieutenant Colonel Raja Muhammad Munir | 31 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 40.    | Major Muhammad Jawad Hanif             | 31 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 41.    | Major Muhammad Awais                   | 31 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 42.    | Major Salman Omer                      | 35 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 43.    | Captain Tanvir Ahmed                   | 33 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 44.    | Captain (Maj) Muhammad Awaiz           | 35 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 45.    | Major Iftikhar Ahmad                   | 35 Sqn   | 2017 |

### Internal Security Operations –Mention in Dispatches

| Serial | Name of Officer                 | Squadron | Year |
|--------|---------------------------------|----------|------|
| 1.     | Major Muhammad Nasheed Iqbal    | 33 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 2.     | Major Farrukh Ejaz Tahseen      | 35 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 3.     | Major Abid Aziz                 | 33 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 4.     | Major Syed Muhammad Ali         | 33 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 5.     | Major Muhammad Imran Afzal      | 31 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 6.     | Major Muhammad Azam Khan        | 35 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 7.     | Major Nadeem Yousaf             | 33 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 8.     | Major Shahzad Naeem             | 31 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 9.     | Major Arif Shafique             | 31 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 10.    | Major Shams Ul Afreen           | 12 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 11.    | Major Muhammad Yousaf Anjum     | 33 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 12.    | Major Khalid Rashid Maooz       | 33 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 13.    | Captain Sajid Ilyas             | 33 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 14.    | Captain Imaad Hussain Siddiqui  | 35 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 15.    | Captain Abdul Ghafoor Fayaz     | 33 Sqn   | 2008 |
| 16.    | Major Muhammad Farooq Akram     | 31 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 17.    | Major Muhammad Naeem Aamir Azam | 31 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 18.    | Major Mazhar Ul Haq             | 31 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 19.    | Major Sohail Khan               | 35 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 20.    | Major Naveed Shakoor            | 35 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 21.    | Major Syed Hammad Dabir         | 35 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 22.    | Major Faisal Kamal              | 35 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 23.    | Major Muhammad Raza Ayub        | 31 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 24.    | Major Kashif Fayyaz Bhatti      | 35 Sqn   | 2009 |

| Serial | Name of Officer                 | Squadron | Year |
|--------|---------------------------------|----------|------|
| 25.    | Major Muhammad Mohsin Makhdoom  | 31 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 26.    | Major Muhammad Jawad Hanif      | 31 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 27.    | Captain Aurangzeb Alamgir Azmat | 31 Sqn   | 2009 |
| 28.    | Major Rana Shehzad Usman Akhtar | 31 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 29.    | Major Zahid Qayyum Tiwana       | 33 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 30.    | Captain Muhammad Adan Jaffar    | 33 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 31.    | Captain Muhammad Asad           | 33 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 32.    | Major Muhammad Imran Akhtar     | 35 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 33.    | Major Sajid Raza                | 35 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 34.    | Major Muhamamd Rehan Khan       | 35 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 35.    | Captain Muhammad Ali Raj        | 35 Sqn   | 2010 |
| 36.    | Major Ashgar Mahmood            | 31 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 37.    | Major Sajid Hussain Mehar       | 31 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 38.    | Major Amir Azam                 | 31 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 39.    | Captain Muhammad Amrose Haroon  | 31 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 40.    | Captain Shehryar                | 31 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 41.    | Captain Jauhar Ayub             | 35 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 42.    | Captain Muhammad Fayyaz Khan    | 35 Sqn   | 2011 |
| 43.    | Major Adeel Ahmed Toor          | 35 Sqn   | 2012 |
| 44.    | Major Naqi Abbas                | 33 Sqn   | 2012 |
| 45.    | Major Aleem Ahsan Durrani       | 33 Sqn   | 2012 |
| 46.    | Captain Raja Khayam Ashfaq      | 33 Sqn   | 2012 |
| 47.    | Captain Munawar Ali Malik       | 31 Sqn   | 2012 |
| 48.    | Captain Muhammad Rehan Ali      | 35 Sqn   | 2012 |
| 49.    | Major Shmayal Raza              | 33 Sqn   | 2013 |
| 50.    | Major Tariq Mehmood             | 33 Sqn   | 2013 |
| 51.    | Major Sanaullah Khna            | 33 Sqn   | 2013 |
| 52.    | Major Arfaan Tahir Qureshi      | 33 Sqn   | 2013 |
| 53.    | Captain Rizwan Ahmed            | 35 Sqn   | 2013 |
| 54.    | Major Asad Nawaz                | 31 Sqn   | 2014 |
| 55.    | Major Altamash Riaz             | 31 Sqn   | 2014 |





| Serial | Name of Officer                | Squadron | Year |
|--------|--------------------------------|----------|------|
| 56.    | Major Kamran Zia               | 31 Sqn   | 2014 |
| 57.    | Major Nasir Ahmed Khan         | 31 Sqn   | 2014 |
| 58.    | Captain Muhammad Sadd Nomani   | 12 Sqn   | 2014 |
| 59.    | Major Kamran Riaz              | 33 Sqn   | 2014 |
| 60.    | Major Uzair Zafar              | 31 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 61.    | Major Salman Munir Malik       | 35 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 62.    | Major Muhammad Waqas Shahzad   | 33 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 63.    | Major Hamid Riaz               | 33 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 64.    | Major Muhammad Awais           | 31 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 65.    | Major Unair Latif              | 33 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 66.    | Captain Fazal Muqeem           | 33 Sqn   | 2015 |
| 67.    | Major Kashif Naseer Bhatti     | 31 Sqn   | 2016 |
| 68.    | Major Shahid Ahmed             | 31 Sqn   | 2016 |
| 69.    | Major Sajid Majoreed Chaudhary | 35 Sqn   | 2016 |
| 70.    | Major Syed Tashkeel Haider     | 33 Sqn   | 2016 |
| 71.    | Major Muhammad Ali Shahid      | 35 Sqn   | 2016 |
| 72.    | Major Tariq Ahmed              | 31 Sqn   | 2016 |
| 73.    | Captain Bilal Suhaib           | 33 Sqn   | 2016 |
| 74.    | Major Muhammad Waqas Shehzad   | 33 Sqn   | 2016 |
| 75.    | Major Moazam Javed             | 35 Sqn   | 2016 |
| 76.    | Major Nasir Ahmed              | 31 Sqn   | 2016 |
| 77.    | Major Nasir Ahmed Khan         | 31 Sqn   | 2017 |
| 78.    | Major Imran Yasin              | 33 Sqn   | 2017 |
| 79.    | Major Tanvir Ahmed             | 33 Sqn   | 2017 |
| 80.    | Major Muhammad Asif Javed      | 31 Sqn   | 2018 |
| 81.    | Major Muhammad Uzair           | 31 Sqn   | 2018 |
| 82.    | Major Uzair Zafar              | 31 Sqn   | 2018 |
| 83.    | Major Murtaza Malik            | 35 Sqn   | 2018 |
| 84.    | Major Ahmed Wajahat Ullah      | 35 Sqn   | 2018 |
| 85.    | Major Muhammad Luqman          | 35 Sqn   | 2018 |
| 86.    | Major Muhammad Farhan Khan     | 35 Sqn   | 2018 |

| Honour and Award – TI (M) |                                   |            |             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Serial                    | Name of Officer                   | Squadron   | Year        |
| 1.                        | Lieutenant Colonel Abid Aziz      | 404 Gp     | 2015        |
| 2.                        | Lieutenant Colonel Mansoor Fazal  | 404 GP     | 2017        |
| 3.                        | Lieutenant Colonel Shahid Sultan  | 404 Gp     | 2017        |
| 4.                        | Colonel Ahmad Mujtaba Azhar       | 404 Gp     | 2017        |
| 5.                        | Major Muhammad Asad               | 33 Sqn     | 2017        |
| 6.                        | Major Adil Iqbal                  | 12 Sqn     | 2017        |
| Shuhada                   |                                   |            |             |
| Serial                    | Name of Officer                   |            | Year        |
| 1.                        | Lance Havildar Muhammad Jahangir  | 31 Sqn     | 2009        |
| 2.                        | Havildar Muhammad Asghar          | 33 Sqn     | 2009        |
| 3.                        | Naik Nazim Hussain                | 499 EME Bn | 2009        |
| 4.                        | Naik Abrar Ahmed                  | 499 EME Bn | 2009        |
| 5.                        | Major Muddasar Razzaq Bajwa, S.Bt | 35 Sqn     | 2010        |
| 6.                        | Captain Asim Karim Khan T.Bt      | 31 Sqn     | 2010        |
| 7.                        | Major Muhammad Yasir              | 33 Sqn     | 2014        |
| 8.                        | Captain Muhammad Murtaza Saeed    | 33 Sqn     | 2014        |
| In Service Death          |                                   |            |             |
| Serial                    | Name of Officer                   |            | Year        |
| 1.                        | Captain Rashid Kafeel Janjua      | 33 Sqn     | 23 Feb 2000 |
| 2.                        | Clerk Sajid Hussain               | 31 Sqn     | 4 Nov 2013  |
| 3.                        | Naib Subedar Ghulam Shabbir       | 35 Sqn     | 23 Jan 2014 |
| 4.                        | Havildar Qasim                    | 35 Sqn     | - - -       |



## A History of History

*An Illustrated History of Pakistan Army Aviation 1947-2007 was published in 2008 and now almost ten years have passed since then; in 2015 an idea was conceived to update the history because of immense contribution of the aviators in war on terror. Major General Anjum Enayat General Officer Commanding, succeeded by Major General Khalil Dar and presently Major General Nasir Dilawar all supported this effort. The fact remains that the Army Aviation have transitioned since the dawn of new millennium from a supporting arm into a fighting corps. Combat Group has been in the forefront in this new transition; thus any new edition of our history have to revolve around them. Regimental histories somehow the other takes time although it looks a simple affair in the end.. Present book although it was in air for some time yet it is to the persistence of Brigadier Rizwan commander of Combat Group and his G-1 Operations Lieutenant Colonel Adeel, that finally it has taken this form. It is a matter of great honour to compile the history of this most enigmatic outfit of Pakistan Army.*

*I joined Army Aviation in 1988 (P-30) at Gujranwala and my and for that matter almost entire course first interaction with the Cobras was during our passing out parade in April 1989. Cobras came a day earlier and took part in the dress rehearsal, they landed in the fields of Rahwali and we saw it from a distance. Everyone had some form of information about the helicopter which none had seen closer. The pilots looked a little distant and sort of alien to us. Major Hadeed Anwar Malik was obvious because of his height. In Karachi, the Cobra pilots used to transit at Scorpion Mess while going to Germany for simulator; it was not a very welcome scene as squadron had to provide transport for their pick and drop from airport. I had met only Major Tasslimon Touqeer while serving in my parent squadron at Karachi, his insignias and dress not to mention his personality and aura all looked regal.*

*While serving at Multan in 1993, a close interaction with Cobras developed, Captain Khattak was my friend and through him I met Captain Nabeel and Captain Amir Raza both were serving in Cobras squadron. The entire base was utilising the lone coaster and Cobra pilots were also part of it. Their working was different from our cargo squadron of Mi-17 and Puma, they would be wearing their flying coverall tucked in with heavy sole DMS shoes. Major Kingravi, Major Tughral and Major Mehmood Ul Hassan (he had a fantastic music system) were some of the more popular Cobra pilots among the youngsters. 31 Squadron was occupying the ground floor and 33 Squadron had the upper floor, The famous poster in 31 Squadron crew room was famous all over the Army Aviation and it was more of curiosity to see it, touch it and listen to the fables surrounding it. Within the Cobra Squadrons there were two types of pilots, one who were qualified on Cobra and other who were Aero Scouts.*



**Major Salman 'Chiefy' and Major (Brigadier Retired) Sehgal SJ**





Major Hashim Khan was the first celebrity of Cobra group, he was the company commander in Pakistan Military Academy and was part of drama serial Sunehry Din which was a big hit at that time. Later Major Amir Raza also came on television due to his work on Quran, he did it in a calligraphic painting. However none can match the works of Major Naeem Khattak, his works adore Aviation Mess Multan and Rawalpindi, he had a dramatic service pattern. He had an owl as a pet in his room in the Aviation Mess Multan, he later did his instructor pilot course. When he retired and finally put off his uniform, he was the most decorated Combateer of his era (Tamgha –I-Basalat, Tamgha –I-Isaar, Tamgha –I-Shujaat). By mid-nineties Major Raheel Sehgal SJ also joined Cobras, he was a national hero due to his act of valour at Siachen. Cobra routine or working hours were different from the rest of the base. Colonel Liaquat Raja was the combat commander, he had a stylish beard and used to wear the dress number five (bush shirt) and his glasses were reflective, at that time only Colonel Qaddafi used to wear that kind of glasses. Colonel Raja had a unique style and years later I realised that all combat commanders had something different in them. Brigadier Tipu had an old Mercedes and for some time he was living in the Aviation Mess as commander; he would dine in the mess with all other officers and watch the television with them, satellite television was a new thing and it was installed only in the mess. In one of the such sitting, the conversation was on the 'Moli Paratha' and Brigadier Tipu took it to 'Molly in England'

I had one court of inquiry which was conducted by Lieutenant Colonel Taqi Naseer Rizvi, it was a straight forward case thus no long sittings but I found him very friendly and brotherly. Lieutenant Colonel Pervaiz Sultan was commanding the squadron, he had been a MI-8 pilot as well, one day he asked for its manual and I gave him, however I forgot to erase some of the pencil sketches drawn in it and this is how I came to know him. At that time only 33 Squadron was having a regular subscription of National Geographic and Readers Digest thanks to Lieutenant Colonel Ahsan Janjua who was commanding it; he and Major General Taqi Rizvi are one of the best buddies which one can imagine. Another iconic personality was Major Chiefy, he had served in 4 Squadron and was serving in 31 Squadron at that time, many a times officers would just visit that squadron to have a cup of tea with him. Ironically, Cobras never extended any invitation to anyone other than their own clan for tea break etc.; there were an unending stories about how tough the life is in Cobras. Cobra squadrons were always busy in the flying or preparing for it, their working hours were almost unending, often going back late at night. Their exercise was also different, which they call battle drills, so was the case with their firing which as matter of fact was the only thing they were doing at that time apart from taking part in the Pakistan Day Parade. The tales of valour during Exercise Zarb-E-Momin was another part of their conversation. Sports rivalry was another thing which was so unique to them, their football match in 1993 ended with both squadrons on route march. It was heart-warming for youngsters as such spirit was existing only among very old regiments of army and not among the aviation squadrons. During our basketball matches with Cobra Squadrons, it was quite obvious that for Cobras winning is everything no matter how it is achieved. Major Waseem Malik (later commanded 33 Squadron) was a fierce competitor (he remained so even after his retirement). We had some great matches with Combat Squadrons, first there was a rivalry between the two Cobra Squadrons and when one of them reached the final then the whole Cobra Group would support it.



**Maj Saleem Khan - The Most Iconic Picture of 80's**



**Brig Hadeed Malik**



Major Hidayat 'Hiddy' was a moving force at that time he was stylish and eager to do something but at that time there was nothing other than firing on ranges thus all heroes of Cobras were built around the firing range. Who has fired how many TOWs and cannons or rockets and numbers were in single digit. Major Hidayat for the record was the first pilot who came into Cobras after pleading to then GOC Major General Rahmat Ullah at Skardu 'what is our fault, why are we not being considered for Cobras'. The new generation of Cobra pilots which includes present commander, then Captain Rizwan (he was without beard then), Captains Faisal, Tariq, Raza Farooq, Tehseen, Sikander, Mateen (he was the tallest officer among Combat Group) Kayani all had reported and were undergoing Jet Ranger course and flying. There were two distinct classes or cadres among the Cobras too, one who were flying Cobras and other who were flying Jet Ranger only but were part of the Combat Group. The difference between them was to me, just like the difference at PAF Base Sargodha between the F-16 pilots and others.

During my stay at Multan till 1998, while in exercises the Cobras had a camp layout of their own style, one major difference from other squadron was in the high number of pilots they have. Parking of Cobras was also different as they had camouflage nets which none of other aircraft in aviation had. Cobra squadrons were also famous for their end of the exercise grand lunch or dinner, Captain Javed (Jay) introduced many new things in it. For record these squadrons were the pioneer in establishing the video library in the base and mess. During summer, the troops of combat group were making kheer and juice of sugarcane, the canteen was located at the same location which is now known as the soldier's cafeteria (they do not make kheer now)

33 Squadron was deputed to go to Somalia in 1993 and it was big news then, for many weeks before the actual departure there were rumours in the mess regarding who is going and who is not going. Once the Cobra pilots arrived back, the tales they had to narrate would take hours. In 1998, 4 Squadron moved to Quetta, my commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Suhail Ikram Siddiqui he was a combat pilot. Colonel Suhail Ikram made MI-35 parked at Multan serviceable and later flew it to Quetta, a remarkable feat. In 4 squadron, apart from commanding officer our second in command was also from combat group Major Tariq Saleem and so was our third in command Major Muzzamil Tajjamul. Thus, a continuous flow of rumours, humour and news of combat group were always updated. Major Tariq Saleem had a vast vocabulary and command of Punjabi language and was always very polite but blunt in using it. From 4 Squadron, Major Umar Rana, Major Ahmad, Major Irfan Ul Hasan later joined Combat Group. Major Umar Rana was an excellent player of basketball and Major Irfan had unending stories to narrate. Lieutenant Colonel Azhar Ansari was also from Combat Group he commanded 4 Squadron, he was too fond of long conversations; In one such incident late Major Aftab Rab had to miss his flight from Quetta because Colonel Ansari just started a chat with him in the mess as he was going to airport.



**Lieutenant Colonel Ahsan Janjua**



**Major Naeemullah Khattak**





*My next interaction with the combat group was in 2004 while compiling the Army Aviation history under guidance of Major General Muhammad Azam then General Officer Commanding Army Aviation. I visited Multan Base and read the digest of service of both squadrons. I met my old squadron mate Major Qaiser Zahoor( later colonel retired) and Captain Omar Mehdi Warraich 'angry young man'. Mehdi has many stories attributed to him, he was young, cheerful and blunt. Captain Wajahat Ghumman is a unit officer of my course mate and I had met him when he was a subaltern at Gujranwala and second when he was adjutant of squadron at Peshawar.*

*Major General Muhammad Tahir was my directing staff during mid-career course in 1992, alongwith Major Jamshed Iqbal Bajwa (JIB); both fine officers. Major General Tahir later commanded 31 Combat Squadron and Combat Group as well, as such no history or account of this outfit will be complete without mentioning him. Fantastic handwriting, starched uniform, concise and precise words, erect military bearing along with an utter dedication to hard work remained his hallmark. He looks and in reality is a very strict disciplinarian, and hard task master; yet the fact remains that last five commanders in succession of Combat Group have served under him while he was commanding officer. Before 9/11, Combat Group had only tales to narrate, things change in the aftermath of 9/11., and this is the precise aim of this chronicle to record this operational history.*

#### **Multan Base-2018**

*I arrived at Multan in January 2018, early in morning with mix anticipation. Coming back to Multan is nostalgic in nature, faces of all the past aviators flashed. I reported to Multan Base at 1100 hours, the road till base is same as in past but the gate itself reminds that time has changed, the strict security check at the gate, armoured personal carriers deployed in the once football ground were a good change. The narrow road track which leads through the living lines of combat squadrons and EME battalions is same as in past.*

*I met Commander Brigadier Rizwan, last time I saw him he was without beard. The new building is different from conventional architecture as it is curved in design. Colonel Mujtaba is the deputy commander, Lieutenant Colonel Jawad Hanif as the AQ, Lieutenant Colonel Ansar as the security officer, Major Harris as GSO-2 and*



***Lt Gen Sarfaraz with Maj Gen Anjam (both are coursemate)***





Major Asif from Signals as DQ; but my main interaction was and till end remains with Lieutenant Colonel Adeel the GSO-1 Operations. The first week is mainly breaking of ice and meeting with the officers. Lieutenant Colonel Imaad Siddiqui is commanding the Panzers, Lieutenant Colonel Mohsin Makhdoom is commanding the Air Wolves and Colonel Zubair is the commander of Air Mustangs; among all of them, I had flown with Colonel Zubair (then captain) in Gujranwala as part of Aviation School related works often going to Sialkot. Lieutenant Colonel Raza deputy commander of Air Mustang was doing basic when I was doing IP course and later was ADC with Major General Azam during the compilation of the Aviation History; he has a wooden stationery tablet, and as the conversation started about this piece, in his absence, the few officers had their own version about this, later when Raza came and it was asked he narrated a very different background to the wooden tablet. It has a love story with a dash of tragedy in it. Thus, at times an ordinary conversation can lead to a nostalgic end.

Compilation of history depends upon the documents, Digest of Service, War Diaries and post operation reports are the main source; like rest of the army all these documents have been kept and maintained in various degree. From 1985 till to date, these documents reflect the officers who wrote and maintain it. Some are very elaborate and some periods are sketchy, it also depends upon the handwriting of the officer who enters the details. Lieutenant Colonel Ahsan Janjua (retired) maintained it with a bit of sense of humour in them. From 2001 onwards under Major General Azam a was given to maintain the history room by all squadrons and resultantly the history of Cobras has been preserved. 31 and 33 both have a classic history rooms fill with pictures, plaques and achievements engraved. 33 has done it on wood thus it is easy to take pictures of them whereas anything on glass have reflections. In 31 Squadron, Major Kashif Bhatti's efforts are worth recording in making of history room. Colonel Wajahat Ghumman as commander of Air Mustang and Combat Group also contributed substantially, he put all the citations of pilots in frames (Major Adeel Toor did a remarkable effort in this regard) later as commander of Combat Group he made plaques having brief history of the operations and along with pictures and maps; thus, history has been preserved and it is being continued now.

The group commanders and deputy commanders reunion is a tradition which was initiated by Brigadier Wajahat Ghumman and is held once every two years; therefore once in a commander's tenure. On the very first day, there was a brunch at the base, officers from all the squadrons were present with their families, brunch has all the classy dishes on the menu, nihari, paye, halwa-puri, channay, juices, lassi, tea, omelets', and so on. Later all the guests were taken around the squadrons history rooms and then there was a photographic session rather sessions. In the evening, there was a golf session and then dinner at Cobra Observation Post. This was not merely a dinner rather it was a demonstration of administrative skills as well. The way it was planned and executed, keeping in mind the operational commitments of the squadron is a great tribute to the family of Cobras. It allows the new generation to interact with the seniors and retired and vice versa it also provides an opportunity to the retired to breathe again in the once familiar air fill with Cobra rotor noise.

Every former combat commander and deputy commander spoke on the occasion, recalling some incident or event of his era, there

were sermons, jokes, poetry and advices; all in all, it makes a wonderful experience. Major General Muhammad Tahir (retired) highlighted that in the morning he had called the Chief of Army



**Lt Col Imaad for photography drive**



**Maj Gen Nasir Dilawar**





Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Hilal-I-Imtiaz, Nishan-I-Imtiaz (both are War Course mates), Chief called back and also gave his message of appreciation for the Army Aviation in general and Cobras in particular 'Army and nation is proud of you, my best wishes to you'. It was received with cheers, enthusiasm and really boosted the morale of all those present on the spot. Later the food, the atmosphere was simply spellbinding. I drove back with Major Asif (DQ) and came to know about in depth about the arrangements, how the track was prepared, the security arrangements, the safety steps taken at the OP itself, there were security personals dressed as civilians and on motorcycles at each turn of the road keeping an eye on the traffic. Just for the record, our driver (from EME Battalion) lost the way back and we were the last one to reach back at base. Next morning, there was a brunch in the Aviation Mess Multan in which Corps Commander Lieutenant General Dogar was the chief guest; his father Brigadier Abdul Hamid Dogar has the unique distinction of being the first army officer to earn both wings, Aviation and Commandos..



**Col Liaqat, Brig Anjum, Brig Dawood, Maj Gen Taqi, Brig Wajahat, Maj Gen Tahir, Brig Hashim, Brig Pervez, Brig Ejaz, Brig Tipu**

Summer of 2018. Wheat crop in the base premises was getting golden every day, mangoes were still in the early stages and weather very pleasant. Like everyone else in the headquarters I also started feeling relax when the commander was away on official duties. This is the hallmark of a good commander that his presence should be felt down to the lowest rank. This is but natural, it is traditional in nature that when commanding officer, no matter how nice he is, is away there is always a breathing space which the under command enjoys. I witnessed this phenomenon in all three squadrons. There was night flying, there was dawn flying, battle drills, maintenance operations check (MOC) and so on. There are projects being in pipe line, the induction of new helicopters, maintenance of existing fleet, replacement of crew at Miranshah, rectification of a Cobra at Peshawar. Some renovation in the mess, uplifting of soldiers' barracks, construction of new JCO Mess, hiring and firing of teachers at the Aviation School, flight safety seminar, preparing for the upcoming firing at OP, reports about such and such incidence. In the new environment, security is paramount in every aspect, troops are issued security passes and no visitor can enter the base without a thorough physical checking. A Security Centre is also setup which monitors the base with all-weather cameras, there are watch towers all along the boundary wall which is also fenced. Troops from an infantry and armoured regiments are also now part of the security paraphernalia. Regular mock exercises are conducted to check the system. All these have transitioned the working of the base, less of visitors especially the credit card and insurance sellers. For the soldiers, it has enhanced the quality of life as all family quarters are also fenced with regular patrolling day and night.



Day has no particular time to start, it seems as if the base seldom sleeps, all night helicopters noise, taking off and landing, startup and ground checks. However, as a standard, the day starts at 0730 hours, Met/Atc briefs have become more scientific and high tech in nature. There are smart screens and projectors, weather is updated through web sites, emergencies are given in real time and there are mockup of Cobra and Jet Ranger in the class room. Yet the decade old tradition of remembering checks by heart is still in vogue. Online Automated System (OAS) is a new revolution, commanding officers, adjutants, and clerks have the computer and mail is received and answered through the computer to the higher headquarters. In order to ensure that office is pack up at given time, army shuts off OAS at given time and then reopens it after a gap of hours. In the base headquarters, the day starts with a briefing session which lasts for an hour and then routine work, however the movement of clerks coming into the offices is less frequented than in the past, courtesy of OAS. Clerks in squadron and in base headquarters have more working space, they have working tables with computer and screens. Base headquarters had hired few civilian clerks in early part of new millennium and they were later made permanent through a court order. Squadrons layout is much grand than in the past, every now and then some innovative idea is carried out by some combater in one way or the other. In Air Mustang, they have covered the sewerage with movable cactus plants. Squadron cafes for soldiers at flight line are as good as one can expect, air conditioned and well furnished, neat and clean, serving hygienic food. However traditional dishes like Sugarcane Kheer is missing, but the sugarcane drink is still available.



**Brig Rizwan and Lt Gen Abdullah Dogar**

During my almost ten weeks of stay, I spent a considerable time in the three crew rooms, my favorite was Air Mustang, the hospitality and the kind of gup shup which I had with Major Sana and Major Virk almost became addictive. Whenever I visited them, I saw both sitting in the same place where I had seen them a day before. Crew rooms of pilots are as usual, a place of relaxing and spending the day, Air Wolves stands out in this regard, they have made good use of the space, rather they have created the space. In Panzer, the historic Cobra Poster is still adorning the wall, Air Mustang are making and creating history. Old and veteran mess waiters of the Combat Group are living history and custodians of its heritage, they have seen the whole lot of commanding officers and base commanders, reporting in squadrons as young pilots and then slowly taking over the command. These waiters like Chacha Murtaza are a pleasure to meet and they would always inquire about the other old combateers pilots, talking in nostalgic manner about the previous commanders and legends. They are an institution by themselves. Pilots all take breakfast in the crew room and it is treat to be there, as every pilot has his own style of breakfast, some like parathas in this particular style and others prefers omelets being made in that manner; it is a great credit to the skills of the mess cook and these waiters to serve such a variety of breakfast. The collection of photographs is an arduous task, reason being the vast data available in the form of digital pictures. All pictures in the book are taken from the various squadrons and some have been taken by the Base photographer Mr Ishtiaq. There is still a dearth of operational areas pictures, the pilots have taken pictures but mostly are in low resolution thus cannot be used for printing. I started with the data base available with the base headquarters which is in excess of 200 GB, however they have pictures dating back to 2014 only. In Panzer and Air Wolves situation is same, Panzers have put almost all old pictures in their history room thus they cannot be scanned without removing them from frames which is a delicate affair. Air Mustangs being new does not have same dilemma, Air Wolves initially were lacking in this aspect and this was the major worry as the rivalry is so intense among the squadrons that , even pictures must number in equality. The Rash- K- Hunar (EME Battalion) again have the same issue, rather they are marinating the history from 2012 onwards thus there is a dearth of





records despite having such tremendous heritage. For the accounts of operations, it must be mentioned that under Major General Khalil Dar , the Army Aviation School was directed to have the mid career course assignments on the Aviation Operations, thus I have made use of them, however since the names of the officers are not given thus author cannot be cited.

Above all , it is the personal account of the pilots which matter most, how they felt in these operations , day to day life, the engagement itself, how the weapons are fired, the maintenance of the Cobras itself, these accounts are not to be found in any of the War Diaries or Digest of Service but only through conversations. No formal interviews re carried out but hours long conversations in the crew rooms, in offices , in mess took place. A letter was written to all commanders, personal calls were made to Colonel Irfan, Brigadier Abid Saeed, Lieutenant Colonel Tariq, Colonel Qaiser, to name few, and few like Colonel Liaqat Raja did sent a written account. Major General (retired) Muhammad Tahir and I had hour long telephonic conversation on the history. I met Major General Taqi Rizvi (retired) at his residence, he cooked a pizza himself and recalled the behind the scene activities on that fateful day when first engagement at night took place. How he had to adjust the crew in order to balance the representation among the squadrons. One can sit for hours with him; his conversation is so humane in nature,; much of the time we talked about the very recent incident that took place hours before my arrival at his residence in which a cat had ambushed his chickens. An interview with Major General Waqar Kingravi also took place , his father in law was late Mr



*Base Commanders and Deputy Commanders, February 2018*





*Hafeez Kardar the very first captain of our national cricket team thus cricket naturally has to be part of the conversation. General recalled the time when he was at USA for the course, also his visits at Miranshah during the operations. Just for the record, I had a long conversation with Colonel Riffat Baig Humayun in 2005, I had gone to his residence at Askari, rather unannounced and found him wearing his old flying coverall and doing some hobby work. From the first look he immediately brings the image of an Apache tribal chief, long thick white moustaches, grey hair and penetrating eyes. I do admit that I made an appointment with Major General Ashraf Choudhry and later had to postpone it due to illness of my mother.*

*Coming to the present time, Lieutenant Colonel Khalid Maoz was a great help, I had long sessions with him at Aviation School which were also joined by Lieutenant Colonel Omar Tallal. Khalid Maoz has all the reasons to feel proud in his achievements as he gave up his claim of joining his father's infantry battalion and opting for an artillery regiment just to be part of aviation and Combat Group. His is a story which definitely motivates youngsters, 'you can achieve what you dream'. Brigadier Wajahat Ghumman was another very useful source of history. The major limitation in such interviews is that as a compiler one has to be abreast of all the operations down to the day in which an action took place involving Cobras or the pilot narrating it. This can in reality happens only when , one has read the War Diaries and Digest of Service alongwith the citations and the complete back ground of the operations; that invariably takes time. In the base headquarters apart from the Brigadier Rizwan who highlighted the Balochistan Operations and the incident in which his own Cobra was short circuited . Deputy Commander also highlighted some key operations like Saidgai, Peo*



**Base Photographer - Ishtiaq**

*Chaar and training at China for Z-10. Lieutenant Colonel Imaad Siddiqui narrated the time spent at Wana, the day he flew in a track suit at Miranshah, he was known as 'Gunner with Ghumman'. Colonel Zubair among all the pilots whom I have interacted has the most precise and concise memory. He was admitted in hospital for some time but his input has been of great help. Major Imran of Air Wolves is rather a young pilot but has taken part in many operations, he apart from these operations also highlighted how his grandfather escaped from the Japanese camps in Burma. Major Agha of same squadron gave the first hand information and experience of Shawal Cut, when his Cobra was fired upon by no less than five RPGs. Living and dinning in the mess has the advantage of interacting with young officers, Major Awais of Air Mustangs recalled how after one long gruesome sortie at Miranshah, his very first; he himself walked on the center line of Miranshah runway just to see whether he can walk straight. If, I have to pick one, it would be the pilots who walked out of Wana Fort into an apple garden, plucked few of them says hello to the sitting armed tribesmen and walks back into the fort. In terms of operations it would be the night evacuation at Datta Khel and definitely the*

*master piece of Cobras; the NVG engagement at Chanegzai. In the end, my sincere gratitude to Lieutenant Colonel Adeel Toor for his help in every sense to accomplish this task and to Brigadier Rizwan Mahmud for having trust in me.*



**Col (R) Wahid Khan**



*With Gratitude, For  
compilation of this book*



#### Author

Major Aamir Mushtaq Cheema (retired) was commissioned in September 1984 (70<sup>th</sup> Pakistan Military Long Course) in 58 Medium Anti-Aircraft Regiment. He earned his flying brevet in 1989 (Pilot Course 30) and served in 7,9,3,4,27 and 5 Army Aviation Squadrons apart from Rotary Wing Faculty in Army Aviation School. He retired in 2008 and later pursued higher education and teaching which includes Master of Arts in History from Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad. Master of Letters in War Studies from University of Glasgow and is presently a scholar of Ph.D in International Relations in National Defence University Islamabad. He taught history at Aitcheson College Lahore and at Langland School and College Chitral. He has written 'An Illustrated History of North Waziristan Militia and Tochi Scouts 1895-2012' 'An Illustrated History of Chitral Scouts 1904-2014' 'An Illustrated History of Khyber Rifles 1878-2014' 'Royal Air Observation Corps 1935-1955' 'An Illustrated History of Punjab Rangers 1958-2018' and co-authored 'An Illustrated History of Pakistan Army Aviation 1947-2007'.

